The Middlebury Campus

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HALF-MILLION DONATION FOR ANTI-RACISM PROGRAMMING ALLOCATED TO DEPARTMENTS, PROJECTS

By LILY JONES
Online Editor

PIA CONTRERAS

One year after Middlebury received a $500,000 donation to support anti-racism programming, seven projects have received funding and six have begun in departments across the college. President Laurie Patton currently oversees about half of the donation, which has yet to be allocated, while Chief Diversity Officer Miguel Fernández oversees the remaining $250,000. Of these funds, $200,000 will be spent on the Vermont campus and $50,000 is for the Middlebury Institute of International Studies in Monterey (MIIS).

The Faculty Committee for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (CDEI) received $105,000, used to provide grants to departments or programs working on long-term projects to combat institutional racism. Professor of Film and Media Culture David Miranda Hardy is the chair of the CDEI and oversees the grant process.

"The idea of the grants are to find a very specific point of intervention in academic units," Hardy said. "We felt an infusion of funding could incentivize faculty that are already interested to work in that direction."

Of the projects, six are already in progress, and applications are accepted on a rolling basis. The grants are capped at $8,000 each.

One of the seven grants is going to the economics department to support students of color.

"The departmental climate for minority students was substantially different than for white students, so they decided to create a system of mentorship that will also improve access to professional opportunities," Hardy said.

The theater department is using its grant for curricular revision with the help of experts in decolonizing curricula. The Gender, Sexuality, and Feminist Studies department is using grant money to develop a medical humanities certificate.

"This will incorporate a feminist and anti-racist lens to the pre-health track, which was based on experiences of recent alums going into the health profession," Hardy said.

The Luso-Hispanic Studies department is modifying its curriculum to allow for better learning experiences for heritage speakers that have learned Spanish in non-academic settings. Another grant is going to Beyond The Page, a group that combines theater performances with other academic disciplines.

The final in-progress project is a student-driven initiative in the education department to develop a sophomore seminar on anti-racism. Additionally, the Writing and Rhetoric Program will soon start a project to enhance anti-racist pedagogies in college writing classes.

The Office of Admissions received another $10,000 of the donation to participate in the Ron Brown Scholars Program, a college scholarship and leadership program for Black students, for two years.

The Twilight Project received $15,000, allowing Rebekah Irwin, director and curator of Special Collections and Archives, to hire a part-time archivist, Kaitlin Buerge '13. Buerge, who recently finished her time as an archivist at the completion of the project, was responsible for outreach to underrepresented student groups and for curating and archiving content like social media and student publications and projects.

"The Twilight Archivist dedicated technical expertise and time to anti-oppressive cataloging standards, addressing racism, sexism, heterosexism, and other systems of exclusion in our catalog and archival descriptions," Irwin said in an email to The Campus. Some examples of Buerge's work include the Reparative Cataloging Project and Community Responses to Anti-Black Racism and Police Violence.

A project organized by Professor of Education Studies Tara Affolter received $6,000 in order to fund a series of short films and a live performance exploring what anti-racism would look like within each academic discipline.

Affolter has hired six students to interview peers across departments, and also works with Beyond The Page to turn the interviews into a script for a live theater performance.

"We want to use the arts to see what we could be, staying in a space of hope and possibility," Affolter said.

The live performance will take place on December 11, with a filmed version to be released in spring 2022. The filmed version will be used to help with faculty professional development spaces such as workshops and faculty meetings.

The final $5,000 was set aside to join the National Center for Faculty Development and Diversity, an organization dedicated to training faculty and students in the professional environment. The balance of $59,000 for ongoing anti-racist projects proposed by the Antiracism Task Force is overseen by Associate Professor of Dance Christal Brown.

The Middlebury Institute of International Studies also received funding to hire two graduate assistants to work on anti-racism initiatives and support other anti-racism work at the institute.

NEWS IN BRIEF: Students brush up against Covid-19 policies

By CHARLIE KEOHANE
Editor at Large

This fall, with long Proc lines, primarily in-person classes and no room capacity limits — according to the campus status page — many students welcome a return to a more "normal" semester. However, ResLife, dining hall staff and Public Safety officers are still tasked with enforcing rules like indoor mask mandates — and apparently have faced pushback from some students.

On Oct. 7, Dean of Students Derek Doucet sent an email to students regarding "troubling incidents" of students refusing to comply with mask mandates.

"In recent weeks, we have received a number of reports about deeply troubling aggression," Doucet wrote. "These incidents have taken the form of verbal abuse, refusal to comply with instructions from College officials, and more rarely, physical altercations."

This email came as a surprise to some students, including Tate Sutter '24.5, a First-Year Counselor in Hepburn.

"Room capacities were the really big thing last year, and without those, it's pretty much asking someone to put a mask on, then that person puts a mask on," Sutter said. "That's been my experience."

Others, like Helen Vaughan '24.5, found that it can be challenging to strike a balance between normalcy and remaining cautious on campus.

"I think it's hard because, on the one hand, like 99% of the student population is vaccinated, so it's really easy to just pretend like everything is fine and be annoyed about having to wear a mask," Vaughan said. "But at the same time, it's still also hard for the dining staff and RAs and custodial staff to have to enforce it because this is still the rule, and you can still get [Covid-19]."

Doucet called for students to reflect on these incidents and brainstorm solutions.

The college is now hosting virtual open office hours on Thursdays, beginning Oct. 14. The office hours will feature a rotating group of senior student affairs staff members, including Doucet, Executive Director for the Center for Health and Wellness Barbara McCall and Vice President of Student Affairs Smita Ruzicka.

First years begin new Compass Mentoring Program

By WILLIAM REED & BEN WAGNER
Contributing Writers

This fall, the class of 2025 will be the first to participate in the Compass Mentorship Program, which pairs students with a non-academic staff member at Middlebury who serves as an additional resource and mentor for the next four years.

Following the dissolution of Middlebury's 30-year-old commons system in the fall of 2020, ResLife — in partnership with other support systems at the college — sought to implement new mentorship systems for first years.

First Year Seminar professors serve as students' academic advisors until they declare a major, often remaining their advisor for more than a year. Compass mentors are supposed to supplement the work of academic advisers during students' first year at Middlebury and remain a point of contact for students seeking resources or advice throughout their undergraduate careers.

The commons system, first envisioned in 1998, split first years into five commons, within which they shared a dean, a first- and second-year residence and ResLife programming. A 2019 report entitled "How Will We Live Together" recommended the dissolution of the commons system and an overhaul of residential learning experiences at the college.

"It didn't mean much to me other than the fact I got to say, 'I'm in Ross, which one are you in?'" Finn Wimberly '23.5 said about the former commons system.

Kristy Carpenter, associate director of Residential Life, worked on the Compass development team to design and implement the new program this fall.

"This program and its early iterations have been in the works for a while now but really gained traction last year," Carpenter said in an email to The Campus. "The Compass team came together virtually to work collaboratively across departments to reimagine a way for students to more easily access and intentionally engage with everything Middlebury has to offer."

Esther Palmer, the Annual Giv-

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SHIRLEY MAO/THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS

A 2019 report entitled "How Will We Live Together" recommended an overhaul of the first-year residential experience.

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Bread Loaf should not have been an option this year. It should never again be an option.

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Student service organizations navigate re-engagement with Middlebury community

By VIRAJ SHANKAR
Contributing Writer

After a year of Zooming with community partners and redesigning college-community interactions, service organizations have started transitioning back to in-person work around Middlebury. With over 98% of the student population vaccinated, normalcy is slowly returning on campus.

During the pandemic, student organizations were largely required to operate online — a stark change for many organizations working with partners around Middlebury. This presented significant challenges, as well as some unexpected benefits; as student organizations readjust to in-person meetings, many are finding ways to synthesize what they learned from the pandemic with what has worked well for them in the past.

Abigail Tinsley '23, co-president of the Middlebury College Access Mentoring (MiddCAM) program, which advises primarily low income or first generation high school students in Vermont on writing college applications, is familiar with the challenges that came with the transition to online meetings: she was a second-semester freshman when the pandemic hit.

"In some ways it was helpful, because it's easier to hop on a Zoom call, but it does impact the relationship that you have with your mentee because you're not physically present," Tinsley said.

She said that advantages that students previously had, such as going to the library or dining hall, were no longer available, which removed a key element of the mentor-mentee relationship. During the pandemic, MiddCAM was unable to train new members or hold any in-person events.

"Everyone kind of stepped back and realized that meeting in-person really is important," Tinsley said.

> "Wi-Fi — that was a consistent problem for us. Maybe students can't have their video on, or they keep cutting in and out, and so it's really tough to get that connection going and sparking in one way or another."

But the drawbacks were ever-present. Tinsley pointed out that the physical barriers present during the pandemic adversely affected the ability to build community within the organization and work with mentees.

"Wi-Fi — that was a consistent problem for us," Tinsley said. "Maybe students can't have their video on, or they keep cutting in and out, and so it's really tough to get that connection going and sparking in one way or another."

Charter House Coalition, an organization that provides transitional housing, shelter, and free meals to individuals and families in the area that need assistance, also had to navigate through major challenges during the pandemic.

During the peak of the pandemic, students working with Charter House were not able to volunteer in person and had to find other ways to support the shelter, said Sarah Fry '22, the president of the Charter House Student Organization.

She also said that the Charter House Student Organization saw a steep drop in student participation last year.

"It was really difficult; we usually grab people's attention at the student fair, as not everyone knows Charter House off the bat. But since the student organization fair was on Zoom, people interested had to join our specific meeting," Fry said, adding that the decrease in volunteers coincided with an increase in demand for services provided by Charter House, further compounding their pandemic difficulties.

> "Everyone kind of stepped back and realized that meeting in-person really is important."

But organizations are moving forward — and taking what they learned from the pandemic to help strengthen their connections to the community.

"It's nice to know that there is that option of FaceTime or Zoom," Tinsley said, of meeting with sudents for MiddCAM. "One of my mentees has practice, and it gets out really late, so meeting at 8 p.m. in person is very difficult; however we can FaceTime at 8 p.m. and it is much easier. I think realizing that there is that option is helpful."

As for the Charter House Student Organization, Fry emphasized that the pandemic has highlighted the need for the organization to focus on the town of Middlebury as a whole, in order to maximize community benefit.

"Before Covid, we were really focused on what we could do specifically for Charter; there was kind of a change that came with the pandemic in the way that we viewed community, and community at a distance; we realized it was important to provide other avenues of support that aren't necessarily directly involved with Charter," Fry said.

Charter House was also able to reach out to partners that they had never worked with before, forming new, potentially long-lasting relationships.

"We partner with a lot of local restaurants usually, as well as sports teams, and while we definitely saw the impact the pandemic had on restaurants helping us out due to staffing shortages, sports teams and even just members of the Middlebury community in general who were able to be on campus, really stepped up to help us provide for Charter," Fry said.

MiddCAM is also back to in-person meetings, and Tinsley said that mentors are happy to be meeting with students in person again, but the organization is giving the option to continue with remote mentoring. Charter House is also operating on a hybrid model of providing services in person and online (largely through social media engagement).

> "It's nice to know that there is that option of FaceTime or Zoom."

Both organizations are hoping to return to in-person events and activities by the beginning of next semester, although, as with many things in the pandemic, that goal can only be tentative. But the prevailing feeling of service organizations is one grounded in optimism.

"It definitely feels great to be back in person," Tinsley said.

MIDDCOURSES, MIDDLEBURY'S STUDENTS-REVIEW-PROFESSORS WEBSITE, REMAINS ON HIATUS

By LAUREN THOMPSON
Contributing Writer

Despite plans to relaunch MiddCourses last spring, the website currently remains on hiatus while a student software development group on campus, MiddDev, works on reprogramming it from scratch. First created in 2014, MiddCourses, Middlebury's anonymous, student-run course review site, was shut down in spring of 2021 after the software the website was programmed on became out of date. Since last spring, students at Middlebury have no longer had access to the information on MiddCourses, which ranged from grading expectations and assignment types to personal anecdotes about professors and courses.

Middcourses was created on an old coding software, Python 2.0, which became incompatible with Heroku, the hosting platform for MiddCourses, according to Nicholas Sliter '23, the project lead of the MiddCourses project for MiddDev. This incompatibility rendered the MiddCourses site completely inaccessible.

The Student Government Association's Innovation and Technology Committee told The Campus in spring 2021 that the webpage would be reinstated in March. Rather than recreate the entire site, the Innovation and Technology Committee was working on converting it from Python 2.0 to Python 3.0. However, the project experienced difficulties and thus saw little progress.

"It's my understanding that there was difficulty getting the program to run on local development machines," Sliter said.

As of now, MiddCourses is currently down and the domain is listed for sale. SGA and MiddDev are now collaborating among a team of 10 students to create a new MiddCourses site using modern web development software, React and NeXT. The website will still be hosted on Heroku.

Sliter hopes to get at least a partially workable form of MiddCourses out to the public before spring course registration; however, he thinks a more feasible reopening for the website will be in about a year. The new site will have the same features as the old MiddCourses, but will feature a more up-to-date interface. It is unclear, according to Sliter, if the old information about courses and professors from the previous MiddCourses will be able to carry over to the new site.

Since the site has been down, many students on campus have been affected by its absence. Emma Crockford '22.5 told The Campus that, before it went offline, MiddCourses was an important resource to determine the workload she was undertaking every semester.

"As an English major," Crockford said, "MiddCourses was incredibly useful in helping me balance the reading and writing workload of my classes."

Professor Mark Spritzer of the Biology Department said that this benefit applies to students in STEM majors as well. Spritzer said MiddCourses could be especially beneficial in helping students balance lab courses with lecture courses. Spritzer is wary, however, of potential bias in student-sourced course review sites.

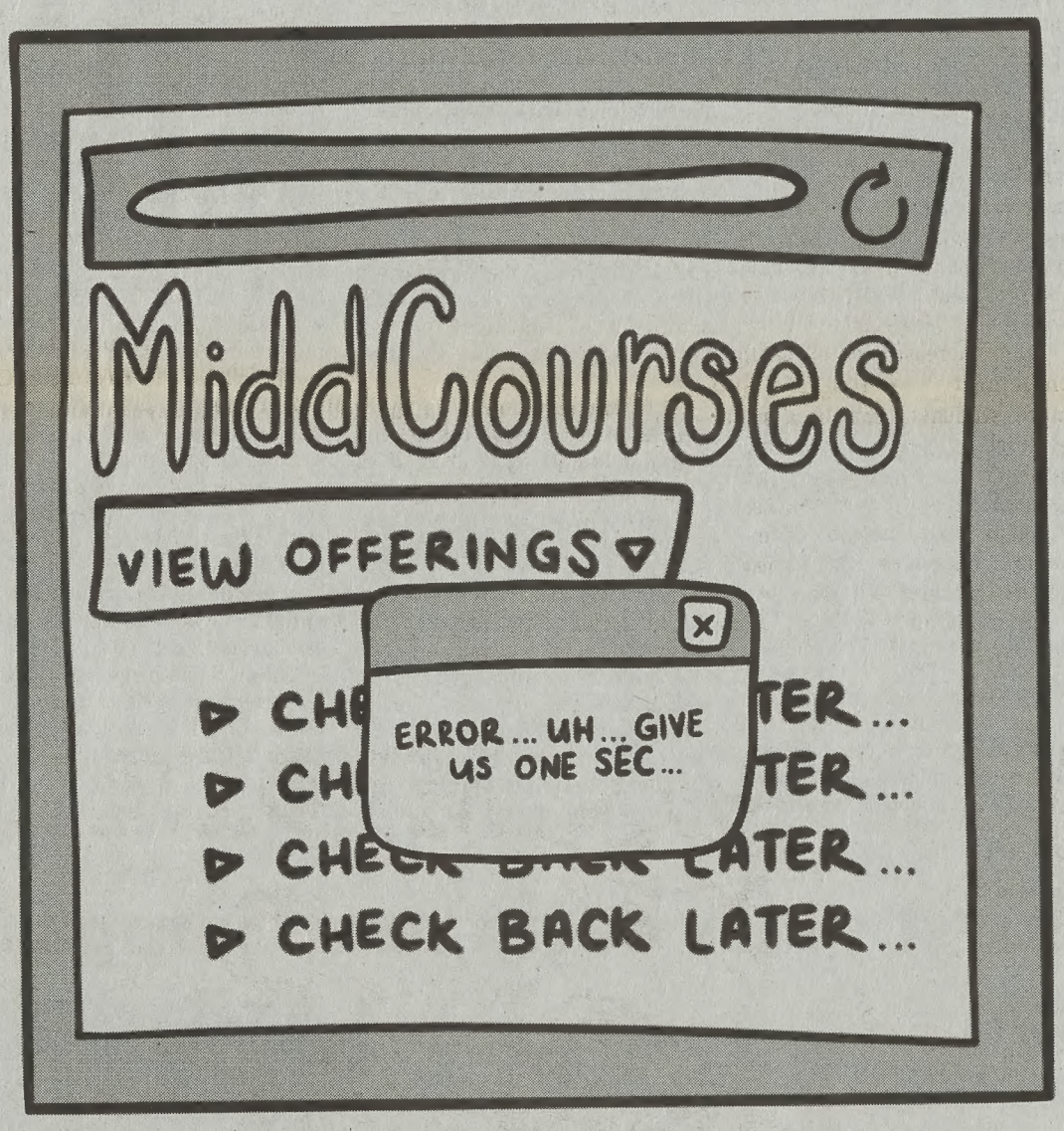
"It's selecting for only those students who have strong opinions for courses, and those will generally be more negative," Spritzer said. "Those more neutral students are less likely to take time to write anything about the course."

Spritzer fears the bias caused by the strong opinions of only a few individuals could steer students away from courses that would be valuable and important to their education.

Some students on campus feel completely unaffected by the MiddCourses' absence. Trey Atkins '22.5 told The Campus that he has not noticed that MiddCourses is down because he never used MiddCourses — even when the site was active.

Atkins is majoring in chemistry and minoring in computer science.

"My major has pretty strict requirements," Atkins said. "Any opinion on MiddCourses isn't going to change if I take Quantum Chemistry this semester."



PIA CONTRERAS

First years begin new Compass mentoring program

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ing coordinator at Middlebury and current Compass mentor, said her experience in the program so far has been "a human being to a human being relationship."

"There's no office attachment to it, there's no specific outcome attached to it in the sense that your academic advisor is trying to help you navigate picking a major or picking your courses," Palmer said.

Palmer noted that the program has no strict structure; it evolves as mentors and students — and their relationships — do.

"It could be that it's intentional... keeping it very kind of open ended and to figure out what works best for the people you're working with," Palmer said.

"Right now, I feel like I can much more easily reach out to my compass mentor than my first year seminar professor," Dan Urchuck '25 said.

Alex Scott-Hansen '25 initially expressed confusion when asked about the Compass Mentorship Program and was not familiar with the program's name, but after connecting the program with the mentor he already knows, said that he and his mentor had gone for an hour-long walk last week discussing campus life.

> "Right now, I feel like I can much more easily reach out to my compass mentor than my first year seminar professor."

"It was a lot more about my social life, the kinds of things I've been up to. All my professor cared about was academics, but my Compass mentor asked me about my friends and what my future plans are," Scott-Hansen said.

Other first years expressed their confusion with the mentorship program and how it fits with their other post-orientation obligations.

The Compass Mentorship program is part of the college's efforts to encourage first years to engage with the campus community. As part of the first year seminar program this fall, all first years are required to attend at least two program events. Many chose to attend the Clifford Symposium, which took place from Sept. 23–25, to fulfill one of the requirements.

In the spring of 2021, the Compass Team reached out to administrative staff seeking volunteers to be mentors.

While the program has officially kicked-off, it will continue developing for the next several semesters. After a year of a ResLife structure in transition, this year's freshman class will be the first to have the Compass Program impact all four years of their college experience.

'GRAND THEFT WHEELS': STUDENTS NOTICE UPTICK IN BIKE THEFT ON CAMPUS

Shirley Mao/The Middlebury Campus

With more students than ever on campus, bike racks have been filling up outside residential and academic buildings.

By AIDAN SHEPARDSON
Contributing Writer

With classes in full swing and students returning to largely in-person class schedules, the pathways through campus that were left largely vacant last year are once again flush with students moving to and from classes, whether by foot or on wheels. While this return to more normal life has been welcomed by students and faculty alike, bike owners on campus have also noted the return of a familiar problem: widespread bike theft.

The increase in on-campus enrollment — roughly 300 more students than in a usual Middlebury year — has brought extra bikes to campus, while the return of in-person classes, athletics and campus life in general has increased the need to get around campus quickly.

One victim of what some students jokingly refer to as "Grand Theft Wheels" shared a story of his scooter being stolen.

> "My guess is someone needed to get somewhere quick and my scooter did the trick. Definitely saved them some walking or running."

"I left my scooter in the hall outside of the dining hall around dinner time, and when I came out of the dining hall about an hour later, it was gone," said Jack Clarner '24. "My guess is someone needed to get somewhere quick and my scooter did the trick. Definitely saved them some walking or running. They probably fell in love with it after the ride and couldn't bring themselves to give it back."

Some owners of lost bikes have found them shortly after their theft. Carter McPhedran '24, whose bike had gone missing from the racks outside of Milliken, stumbled across it outside of the Mahaney Arts Center, leaning against a bike rack and completely unscathed.

"I left it unlocked outside Milliken on a Saturday and then didn't need to use it again until Monday morning to get to my class," McPhedran said. "When I went outside to ride it to class it was gone, and I didn't find it until that Thursday at a random bike rack all the way across campus."

Students are supposed to register their bike with Public Safety, but bicycle registration is rarely enforced and not all students report stolen bicycles.

Complaints of bike theft have also cropped up on MiddConfessions, an instagram account with over 1,700 followers that allows people to post their thoughts about campus life anonymously. While these complaints are no indication of actual rates of bike theft, public awareness of the issue is growing.

> "I left it unlocked outside Milliken on a Saturday and then didn't need to use it again until Monday morning to get to my class. When I went outside to ride it to class it was gone."

Demand for bikes nationally has also accumulated with massive blows to the international bicycle supply chain over the course of the pandemic, causing a sizable bike shortage across the United States since the beginning of the pandemic. Students scrambled for bikes at the annual bike sale held by the Middlebury Bike Shop on campus at the beginning of each semester, but with so few to go around, many were left wanting.

Josh Rosenstein '24, who did manage to secure a bike at the sale, said that bikes sold out quickly this year.

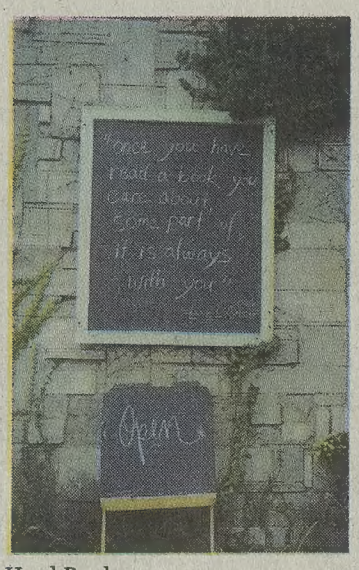
"I showed up 20 minutes early and was able to purchase a bike, and probably 10 minutes later they had already sold out," Rosenstein said.

Despite the various possibilities of why there has been such a dramatic increase in bicycle theft on campus, there is a general sense among students that the explanation is much simpler.

"I think people are just lazy this year," said Alice Ganey '24.

Barbara Harding: I bought a used bookstore and quit my job

By FLORENCE WU
Local Editor



The front entrance of Otter Creek Used Books.

Otter Creek Used Books looks and smells exactly like what one would expect of a secondhand bookstore in rural Vermont. Hidden behind the main highway that cuts through the town, the store had a sign that announced the weekday hours and a cheeky "Sundays by chance." Next door, a deli played jovial jazz tunes, and customers at a nearby teahouse chatted out in the sun.

As soon as I stepped through the door frame, the jazz and the chatter faded away, absorbed by the yellowed, dog-eared books that insulated every wall. Walking through the narrow alleys between the shelves, it occurred to me that the biggest difference between commercial bookshops and used bookstores is that the former wants you to buy books, but the latter welcomes browsing and having visitors sitting down to read. The store seemed cluttered in a welcoming way.

Barbara Harding, the owner, was born in Hudson, New York, and moved to Weybridge, Vermont, in 1962. In the 60s, Weybridge had a significant farming community that did not look favorably on the city dwellers. As a former New Yorker, the nine-year-old Barbara was not well received in her classes.

"As soon as the teacher left the room, the kids collectively pushed me, without actually touching me, to the corner of the classroom," Barbara said, laughing as she recounted her first day of school. However, now she identifies comfortably as a local.

"There is a distinct Vermont way of life, and I learned that from my first day of school," she said. "Things are not as rushed. People are closer to each other."

After completing her education, Barbara remained in Middlebury and pursued a successful career in tourism for a decade. She loved the industry but found the work stressful.

"I distinctly remember that day. I was in my office, like usual, and all of a sudden I just had to go for a walk and take my mind off of work. I distinctly remember slamming my chair into my office desk and leaving from the front door," she said.

On that day, instead of following her usual path — a right turn that would take her to a residential neighborhood — Barbara took a left and

> *Continue to Part 2*

"When you are my age you look back on life a lot. I often wonder what would happen if I took a right turn instead of a left. Will I still be working in tourism? I don't know. All I know is that the moment I got the bookshop it completed me in a way that I could say 'I am me.'"

Barbara Harding, owner of Otter Creek Used Books.

An old photo of Barbara with her younger brother, in front of her work desk.

Barbara behind the counter, talking to a customer.

A few covers from the bookstore's Vermont collections.

Part 2

went down a path she's never gone before. The path led her to a used bookstore for sale.

"I asked for the price and immediately decided: This is it. This is what I am going to do," she said. "I called my husband and told him we are buying a used bookshop. He said, 'OK.'"

A year later, Barbara quit her day job and started running Otter Creek Used Books full time.

Although the purchase was spontaneous, Barbara has a long history of interest in reading and visiting second-hand bookshops. Wherever they went, Barbara and her husband would always seek out used bookstores.

"When you are my age you look back on life a lot," said Barbara. "I often wonder what would happen if I took a right turn instead of a left. Will I still be working in tourism? I don't know. All I know is that the moment I got the bookshop it completed me in a way that I could say 'I am me.'"

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A walking tour of the Middlebury Bridge & Rail Project

By BECCA AMEN & FLORENCE WU
Senior Local Editor & Local Editor

If you're walking around the concrete of the new Triangle Park in downtown Middlebury, look down at the ground. You'll be able to see two parallel diagonal lines on the sidewalk that reflect the shape of the new rail tunnel directly below.

Last Wednesday, Bridge and Rail Project Community Liaison Jim Gish took the two of us on a tour of the recently finished Bridge & Rail project. As community liaison, Gish relays updates on the project to Middlebury residents by publishing weekly blog posts, among other methods. Along the way, we were able to learn not only about the technicalities and logistics of taking on such a huge construction project but also about Gish's life and what led him to this crucial work.

A native Californian, former resident of Princeton, N.J., and alumnus of Swarthmore College, Gish studied English in college and worked as a textbook publisher prior to assuming his current role. He's lived in Middlebury since 1998, noting that while the day-to-day has sped up over the course of his time here, the town is still more oriented toward quality of life than his previous hometowns have been.

"I got embedded with the project team here, so all these construction guys and designers, engineers and everything," Gish said. "For the last almost six years, I've just been a part of the [Bridge & Rail] team day in and day out, but my job is to be an advocate for the town and also to communicate between the state and the town."

As we were walking down to the tunnel, Gish pointed out Cross Street Bridge, which spans Otter Creek and passes above Mister Up's Restaurant & Pub. The overpass was built about 10 years ago, and according to Gish, its existence has made the Bridge & Rail project possible. When Main Street closed to enable the most drastic underground and aboveground construction, the bridge became the sole artery for foot and vehicle traffic across town.

A train derailment in October of 2007 — which happened right where the mouth of the tunnel closest to Cross Street Bridge is — was caused by the breakdown of the tracks and prompted the complete overhaul of the rail line. But the team took this needed rebuilding as an opportunity to account for every detail. For example, the new tracks have been laid with continuously welded rail, which makes the transit of freight traffic quieter and reduces vibrations with the passing of trains. Rail traffic through Middlebury resumed last year.

Other thoughtful details included lowering the rail line to accommodate double-stacked cars, which encourages more diversion of freight traffic from Route 7, and taking care to make the finished product as aesthetically pleasing and as minimally disruptive as possible, complete with a mix of clean horizontal and vertical lines and concealed infrastructure.

The project has been hard on the town. It meant closures to downtown roadways for some time, cutting off traffic to local businesses and complicating commutes and errands. Still, Gish reminisced about the summer of 2021 when townspeople would gather to watch the large crane that was stationed in downtown Middlebury.

"In a pandemic summer, where everybody was close to home, it was nice for everybody to come outside and enjoy being with one another," Gish said.

Nearing the end of our tour, as we emerged from the other side of the tunnel near Marble Works, Gish also mentioned that, after the two of us graduate in the spring of 2022, we'll be able to come up to Middlebury via Amtrak and visit our alma mater. The platform is already finished, and Gish estimates — perhaps optimistically, he notes — that trains will become available in the area at the end of the first quarter of 2022. As of now, the Amtrak station closest to the college is in Rutland, nearly an hour's drive from campus.

The new platform was built in the original location of the shire's train station. The town of Middlebury plans to go in and create parking in front of the platform by Christmas, according to Gish. It will then be ready for Amtrak to fulfill its end of the deal next year.

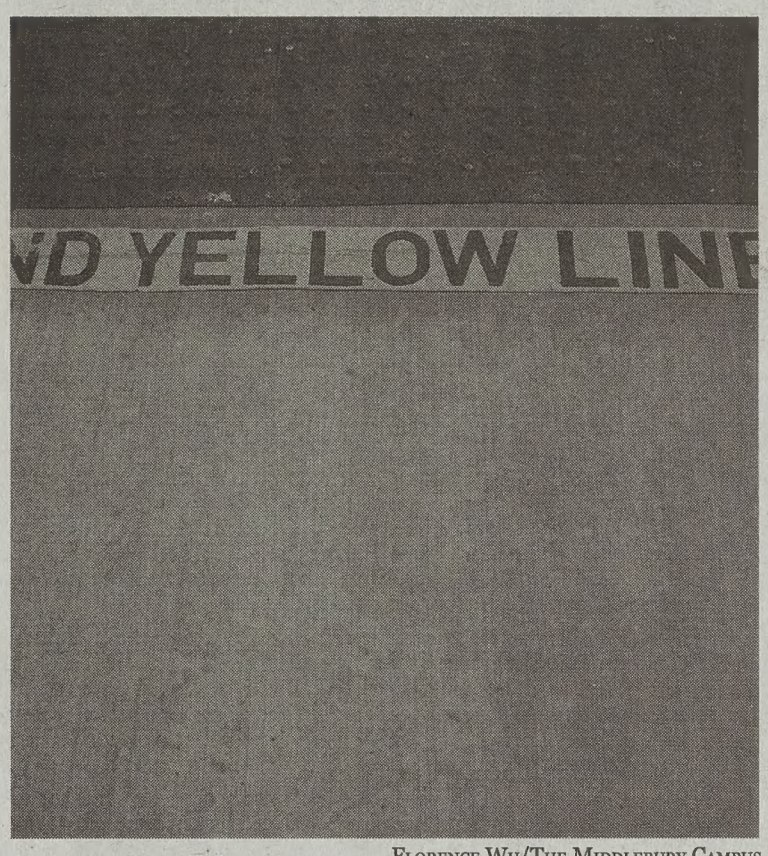
Before we parted, Gish pointed out the stone labyrinth — a space intended for both meditative reflection and play — funded by the Parish of St. Stephen's. It wasn't an original feature of the new Lazarus Park, but the church separately conceptualized it, and the town of Middlebury installed it for them. He also highlighted the sidewalk poems etched into concrete, a project funded in part by the Vermont Arts Council.

As we turned around, we looked upon the campus, pondering how the Middlebury Chapel appeared to be the same height as Old Chapel from our vantage point. The bell of the Congregational Church of Middlebury chimed 10 a.m., and a friendly couple passing by congratulated Gish on the completion of the project.

"That's the thing that blows my mind about Middlebury," Gish said. "You walk 100 feet, and the view changes."

Florence Wu/The Middlebury Campus

Amtrak service between New York's Penn Station and Middlebury is expected to be completed during the first quarter of 2022.



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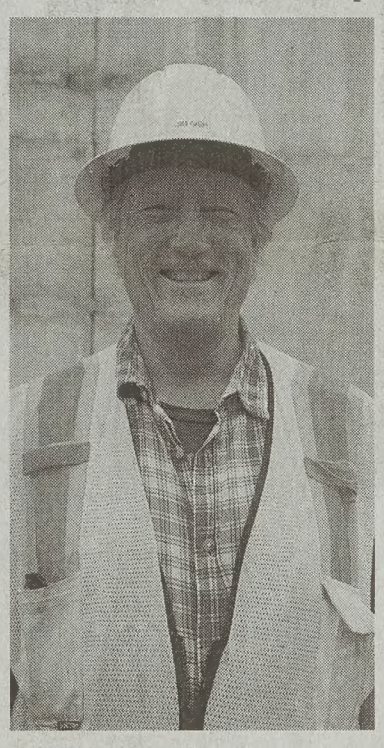
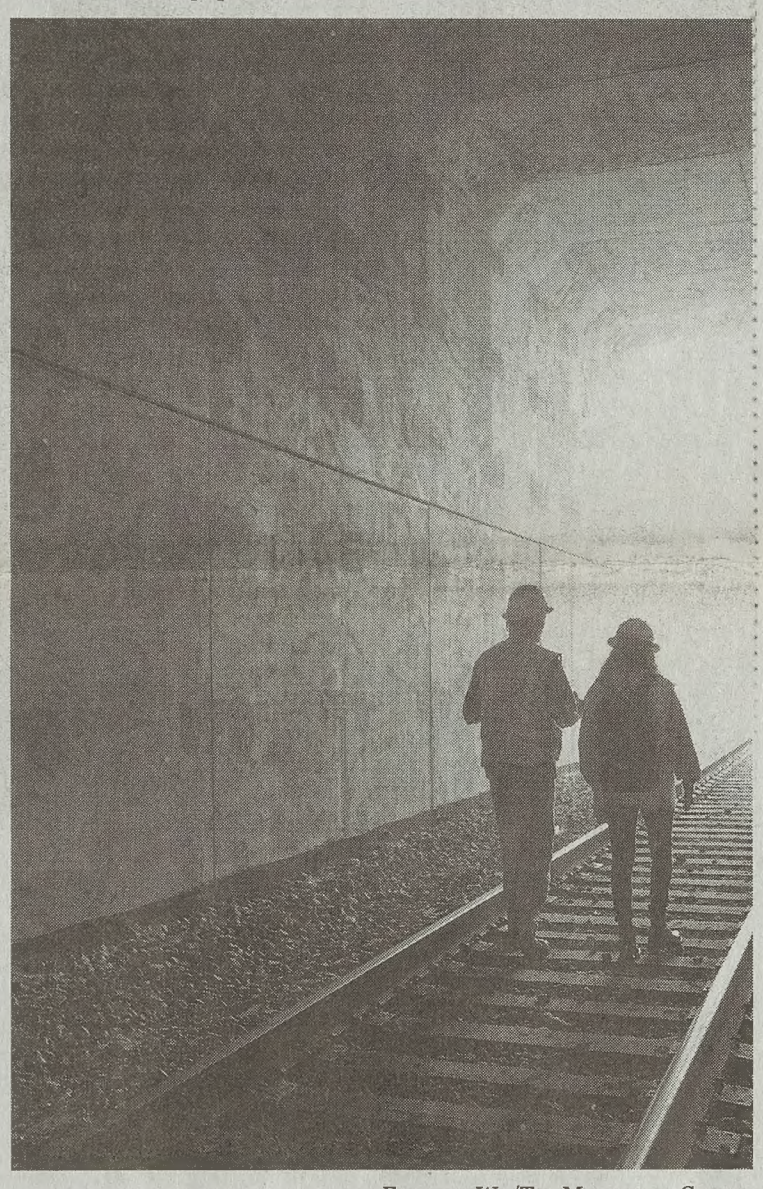
The new train platform is located in the same place as the shire's former train station.



Florence Wu/The Middlebury Campus

As the community liaison for the project, Jim Gish is in regular contact with the major stakeholders in the project and updates the community through his project blog.



Florence Wu/The Middlebury Campus

Gish and Amen walk down the rail corridor that replaced the bridges on Main and Exchange St.

Addison Central School District continues to take preventative measures against Covid-19

By EMILY HOGAN
Layout Editor

With a year and a half of instruction amid an ever-changing environment under their belt, the Addison Central School district is back to in-person classes for pre-K through twelfth grade. But according to Laurie Ballantine, administrative assistant at Cornwall Elementary School in Cornwall, Vt., policies remain strict throughout the district in order to best "stop the spread." Students are required to wear masks at all times, except when eating or drinking, out at recess or sitting six feet apart outside of the classroom.

In addition to this mask policy, there are policies limiting visitors in Addison Central schools.

"In normal times, you'd have ... parents coming in the building to drop off lunches or pick students up," said Justin Campbell, principal at Middlebury Union High School (MUHS). However, with Covid-19 regulations in place, the building is closed to outside visitors aside from essential workers such as electricians.

The school also has contact tracing protocols in place so that, should an outbreak occur, they will hopefully be able to minimize its severity.

"Students sign in and out of classrooms, and we know where students are sitting in the lunchroom, for example," Campbell said.

These policies remain similar to those of the previous year. This could largely be attributed to the fact that vaccines are not yet available to most elementary school students. Nevertheless, there are considerable changes that have taken place in the 2021-22 school year. In the previous school year, Addison County schools relied on cohorted instruction to limit the spread of Covid-19.

"The grades 7-12 were subdivided into two cohorts that met in-person two times a week and were remote three times a week," Ballantine said.

The youngest pre-K students were similarly divided into cohort groups but met in person four times a week. Finally, grades K-6 were in person five times a week, but significant measures were put in place to minimize disease spread.

"[Students] were not allowed to remove masks unless they were eating. [Masks] were required to remain on even at recess," Ballantine said.

Policies regarding school events are still subject to change, and the schools plan to hold events for the student body when they can, even though the format of these events might look quite different from previous years. At MUHS, Campbell noted that the school holds indoor dances in normal years. This year, during homecoming weekend, there was an outdoor bonfire instead of a dance.

There is also an air of uncertainty regarding athletic events as winter approaches. This fall season, MUHS athletic teams were required to play their games outdoors, although the fall sports, who already play outside, were unaffected.

As winter approaches, the schools will have to deal with the logistics of hosting indoor sports. Some considerations include whether the school should allow fans to attend games or institute mask policies at matches.

Campbell noted that, while school-wide events are happening this semester, most will have to be conducted outside. At Cornwall Elementary and other schools throughout the district, Ballantine noted that they plan to organize school-wide events this year but are following state guidelines for extracurricular activities.

While vaccinations are not available to a significant portion of the student body in the Addison Central School District, schools are working toward implementing strategies to increase vaccinations for those eligible and develop knowledge of who is vaccinated. MUHS has organized and continues to run vaccination clinics for both the student population and local community.

Campbell notes that the Vermont Agency of Education and Health Department has outlined a "self-attestation policy" in which the schools can gather input from students and their parents or guardians on their vaccination status.

"We're getting a better sense of who among our student population is vaccinated," Campbell said. At the superintendent level, there is an evaluation in progress of faculty and staff vaccination status. While there is currently no vaccination requirement for staff, Campbell suspects one might be implemented in the near future.

Ballantine hopes that there might be a return to normal in the future but said that, for the time being, measures must be taken to keep students safe.

"We are following the guidelines from the CDC and the Educational Department for the State of Vermont," Ballantine said.

As for MUHS, there are ongoing meetings taking place to evaluate the impacts of the evolving pandemic. A district-wide group composed of administrators, nursing and support staff, teachers and union representatives come together monthly to look at data and state guidelines to respond effectively to changes.

"If conditions change one way or the other in some dramatic fashion, we'd have to respond," Campbell said.

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The Middlebury Campus

Learning to redefine disability

Notes from the Desk

Daleelah Saleh '23 is an Opinions Editor for The Middlebury Campus

I have anxiety and depression. My favorite color is purple (or blue, depending on the day). I'm happiest in libraries, at concerts, on the beach or watching sunsets. I'm passionate about multimedia storytelling and creating positive representation for marginalized communities. Fall is my favorite season (partially because my birthday is in October and partially because of how beautiful the leaves look). I'm a New Yorker and thought I would never survive outside a city, but am learning to love the access to nature that living in a rural setting affords me. I understand rationally that these are all facets of my being, that without any one of them, I would not be the person I am. But I'm still wary about attaching the label of "mentally ill" to myself.

I've been grappling with my mental health for most of my life. After my parents divorced, my mom decided it would be healthiest for me and my brother to learn how to process our feelings in therapy. As first and third graders, respectively, we weren't thrilled by this prospect — especially since we had some therapists we didn't get along with. In retrospect, I give her major kudos for this: recent studies have found that only about 10% of children see a therapist before they turn 18.

I was in sixth grade when we found someone we really liked and I have been meeting with her ever since. I've also been a proponent of mental health initiatives and in high school I advocated for more accessible mental health resources on a local and state level through the New York Civil Liberties Union. As a student at Midd, I've had multiple conversations with peers about mental health, some of them even among the Editorial Board of the Campus.

On a wider level, mental health isn't the taboo it once was. Whether diagnosed officially or not, many of my friends are open about the ways in which they've struggled with their mental health, both on and offline. Over the years, social media accounts dedicated to raising awareness around mental health and promoting resources have become more commonplace. There are varying stats on Gen-Z mental health, but studies agree that more than 2/3 of Gen-Zers are mentally ill in some capacity — a proportion much higher than for previous generations.

Despite this generally more mental-health savvy culture and all of my own resources — having access to a therapist, having a mom who "got it," having a Posse mentor and a greater support network on campus, I still fell through the cracks.

I spent my first semester in college on a schedule fit more for a vampire than an 18-year-old. I'd wake up at 7:30 a.m., spend my morning trying not to fall asleep in classes, get lunch, then go back to my room and pass out until 7, 8, or sometimes 9 p.m.. I would proceed to stay up until anywhere from 2 to 5 a.m., struggling to focus and get my homework done. Rinse and repeat.

On paper, I had a great first semester. Sure, I was constantly on the verge of a breakdown, but at least my transcript and résumé were strong.

In retrospect, this feels like an almost superhuman feat. I can't imagine pulling off the grades and extracurriculars I did, while running on the consistent lack of sleep I had. Maybe it's because Covid-19 drained me of the capacity to run on nothing but sheer willpower, caffeine and adrenaline. Or maybe it's because I've learned not to push myself past my limits anymore — or at the very least, how to stop prioritizing everyone and everything above myself.

> I was made to feel like it was my fault, like if I had just managed my time better and worked more effectively I could've stayed afloat.

I don't think I turned a single assignment in on time that semester. While I had been repeatedly assured that everyone struggled with adjusting to their college course load, this felt outside of the realm of typical transition-period difficulties. People in my hall and in my classes were still somehow able to be up at the same time the sun was, and maintain some sort of a social life.

While I recognized that functioning in a constant state of burnout wasn't healthy, it was second-nature to me — I didn't have a blueprint for operating any other way. I graduated from high school with an IB diploma at the cost of my sleep and my sanity. I was privileged to learn how to write strong analytical papers, how to conduct research, how to engage with my course material and the world around me in meaningful and critical ways. But I also adopted a really toxic mindset of prioritizing assignments and grades over my mental and physical health. This mindset transferred over to my time at Middlebury. It's one that seems to thrive in high-pressure academic environments known for their rigor.

After multiple FaceTimes with my mom that ended in tears, I was forced to admit to myself that something was wrong, that I was drowning, that I needed help. But asking for help was easier said than done. I worried that admitting I was struggling would be conceding that I didn't belong at Midd, that I wasn't capable of handling the workload, that I didn't deserve to be here. These fears were rooted in imposter syndrome — which is especially common for women of color at predominantly white institutions.

> You can't advocate for yourself if you don't think you deserve help.

I eventually reached out to all the resources at my disposal. Soon, my mentors knew I was struggling, my professors knew I was struggling, my dean knew I was struggling, my academic advisor knew I was struggling. They were sympathetic, outlining various avenues of support I could access — but not one of them suggested that I try to get accommodations. Instead, they advised me to go to the Center for Teaching, Learning and Research and work on creating schedules for myself — a method I had already been taught in high school. I was made to feel like it was my fault, like if I just managed my time better and worked more effectively I could stay afloat.

While schedules and time-blocking can be helpful, no amount of time-blocking could cure my brain fog. I'd sit and stare at my computer for hours, willing words to appear on the screen, but I couldn't do it. I spiraled into a vicious cycle where I would get so anxious about something having to be not only good, but perfect, that I would avoid doing it. Then, when the deadline had passed and I was still faced with my blank screen, I felt guilty, which made me more anxious. With fight or flight out of the picture, that left me with a third option: feeling frozen. These are classic symptoms of mental illness, symptoms that, in retrospect, so clearly point to a need for help.

It's not that I'm unfamiliar with accommodations, it's that I never thought they applied to me. Being high-functioning means that the struggles I go through because of my mental illnesses exist below the surface. One of my family members has ADHD and he's had an Individualized Education Program, the pre-collegiate version of accommodations, for many years now. Professors are required to include information about the Disability Resource Center on their syllabi and they often encourage students to reach out for accommodations. I always skipped over this part. My perception of accommodations was that they were for people with learning disorders or physical disabilities, not those struggling with anxiety and depression. You can't advocate for yourself if you don't think you deserve help.

> The fact that I have mental illnesses is not good or bad, it just is. They're a part of me just as much as my favorite colors, settings and seasons. But even as I type that sentence, I know that it is something that I'm still coming to terms with.

Halfway through my sophomore fall, I discovered that one of my friends was given accommodations because she had panic attacks — something that I also dealt with. This surprised me, not because I didn't think she deserved them, but because so much of the language surrounding accommodations highlights "disability." I was forced to redefine disability — not only on a larger scale, but in my own relationship to it. My mental illnesses were so ingrained into my daily life that I overlooked the fact that they were just that: illnesses. More importantly, I overlooked the fact that being neurodivergent meant I had to work harder than my neurotypical peers to complete the same assignments — not because I was any less capable, but because I had to overcome the barriers that come with anxiety and depression in the process. Somewhere along the way, I forgot to be proud of myself for what I've been able to accomplish despite having to overcome so much. Instead, I fell into cycles of beating myself up for not meeting my fullest potential.

The next week, I applied for accommodations. Despite this being a multi-step process, as outlined on the Disability Resource Center website, it was less of an ordeal than I had braced myself for. I had expected to undergo an interrogation of sorts, to prove that I genuinely needed help and wasn't trying to cheat or find an "easy way out." I reached out to my therapist beforehand to ensure that she could produce documentation to back up my claims. While this streamlined the process, I later found out that it wasn't even necessary (despite what the language on the site about documentation suggested), and that students could get assessed through the school. In comparison to these daunting preconceptions, the actual process seemed almost overwhelmingly simple.

I emailed the Disability Resource Center, set up an appointment with them, and over the course of an hour, explained the ways in which I was struggling and was presented with different solutions in the form of accommodations. Almost immediately after, I received a provisional Letter of Accommodation and got a permanent one after filling out some paperwork and sending documentation from my therapist.

While I was grateful for how straightforward the process was, and for the lack of red tape around it that I had previously envisioned, I felt bitter (and still do) that it took so long to get there, that I had been so wary about reaching out for help before. There's an astounding amount of irony in the fact that the site for the office dedicated to accessibility uses official language that is inaccessible to students and doesn't have clearer guidelines on what qualifies as a "disability" for the sake of acquiring accommodations.

While I wasn't told to seek out accommodations my first semester, I was advised to drop a class. This happened again last semester, when I was falling behind on readings and assignments. Both times, I refused. I told myself I could stick it out, despite the sleep and peace of mind I knew it would cost me.

Even though I was granted the institutional support I so desperately craved two years ago, there's a sense of shame that continues to hang over me, that exists in tandem with a self-imposed expectation to prove myself: at first, just as a woman of color at Middlebury, but then, as a woman of color who qualified as having a disability. At the beginning of this semester, I was hesitant to send a professor I admired my letter of accommodation, worried it would make him think less of me, that I'd have to work harder to prove I was a "good student."

I think this is representative of a wider stigma associated with mental illness, that it is something that is a burden, something to be worked around, something to be "dealt with." On the flip side of this stigma, I've seen discourses that reframe mental illnesses in an overly positive light, even going so far as to call them "superpowers."

Neither of these feel right to me.

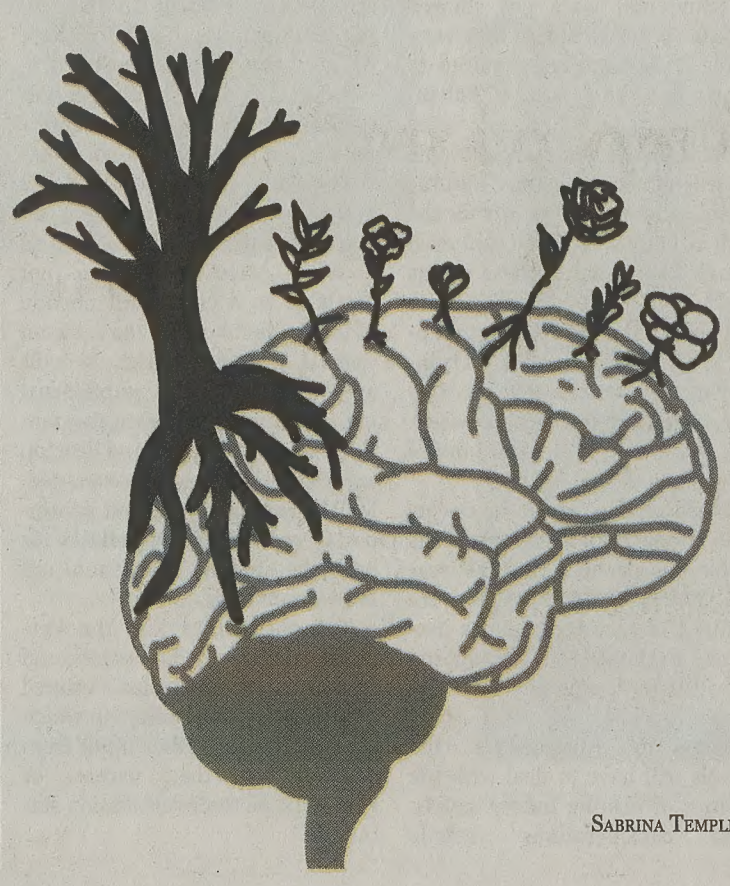
My anxiety and depression mean spirals and panic attacks — where it feels like the walls are closing in on me and I can't catch my breath no matter how hard I try. On good days, though, I can acknowledge that they're the parts of me that make it easier to empathize with others, to provide a good listening ear and advice if needed.

The fact that I have mental illnesses is not good or bad, it just is. They're a part of me just as much as my favorite colors, settings and seasons. But even as I type that sentence, I know that it is something that I'm still coming to terms with.

My ability to acquire accommodations was entirely circumstantial, a combination of privilege and luck. If I had never met my friend who had accommodations because of her panic attacks, I'm not sure that it would've ever crossed my mind to pursue accommodations for myself. If my mom hadn't put me in therapy, it might have taken me a lot longer to name the issues I was facing and learn how to cope with them. The list goes on.

I want to envision a world (or at least a better version of Middlebury) where if you're struggling, you get the help you need. Not just through individualized support like accommodations, but more structural solutions that allow grace and create room for students to get extensions and similar "aid"— not because a Dean said they should, but because they know themselves best, and they know they need it.

But that can't happen until we're able to have open, honest, vulnerable conversations about the ways in which we are struggling. This, in turn, requires overcoming the shame and guilt associated with not meeting expectations — whether those be your own or those imposed upon you. I hope that this article is a start.



SABRINA TEMPLETON

Middlebury students deserve to live at Middlebury College

Notes from the Desk

Sam Lipin '23.5 is a Sports Editor for The Middlebury Campus.

Bread Loaf should not have been a housing option this year. It should never again be an option.

I am a junior Feb, meaning I had five weeks of normal Middlebury life before being dealt a heavily altered college experience lasting the next two and a half semesters. During those two semesters, the undergraduate experience that I had so often dreamt of only existed as such, a dream. While my friends, my Feb class and the other students who decided to stay on campus made the best of our situation with intimate group hangs and Settlers of Catan tournaments held outside, it was an incredibly difficult time to be a young person who yearned for socialization after quarantine. While the year of Covid-19 yielded more genuine relationships, it often left me feeling unfulfilled and desperate for normality. I was comforted by the hope that there was light at the end of the tunnel. As vaccines were rolled out across the country and Middlebury's messaging confirmed that most of the restrictions in place would be relaxed, I looked forward to finally experiencing a normal Middlebury College for the first time.

How naïve I was.

When I arrived at Bread Loaf, I did not see another human being for the next 36 hours, emblematic of the social exile inherent in living a more than 20-minute drive from campus. I felt like a graduate student, attending the school but removed from the social fabric. Now, I am dependent on my friends to invite me to gatherings and events because I am unable to host my own. I have often found myself in limbo on campus, desperate for a new place to hang out after feeling uncomfortable in unfamiliar places and unable to return to the oasis of my own personal space lest I conclude my socializing for the evening.

While other students chose to take the semester off or study remotely, took this time to travel the country or party in South Carolina, I was foolish to believe that I would be rewarded for demonstrating how important it was to me to live on campus.

I was foolish to believe that the administration was empathetic to the social and emotional effects of Covid-19. I thought after sinking into newfound mental health lows due to isolation, loneliness and adjusting to a new social scene, the school might be extra diligent in remedying the ways in which they had contributed to such lows. I was foolish to believe I would always have a home at Middlebury College simply because I attend the school.

Sophomores and seniors control the larger social spaces, like suites and townhouses, while juniors only inhabit singles and doubles and the occasional involvement in an interest house. While Middlebury's housing policy requires all first years and sophomores to live on campus in an attempt to provide them with all of the opportunities to make new friends and become accustomed to campus life, juniors and junior Febs were not able to take advantage of this opportunity. I expected the school to be aware of this phenomenon and to provide our class with a second chance at enjoying the social perks of being an underclassmen since we never got a first chance. We missed our first opportunity for a vibrant social life and now must wait until our senior year to regain control of our own social scene.

At a small, community-oriented liberal arts college, commuting defeats the whole purpose of the school's mission. Hindered by the pandemic and the college's mistakes during the prime time of socialization in our lives, Bread Loafers are struggling to be a part of the Middlebury community to the detriment of their mental health. The administration has clearly acknowledged their mistakes, evident in the attempt to soothe our anger with free ski passes and priority housing next year. However, the administration will never acknowledge the toll on our mental health in case they need to banish a future junior cohort to Bread Loaf.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

"The Other Pandemic" (October 7, 2021), signed by Professor Jason Mittell on behalf of the AAUP Executive Committee and Working Conditions Committee, contains at least one false statement and one claim that cannot be supported by any known data.

"Vermont case counts are currently higher than nearly all other states with NESCAC schools."

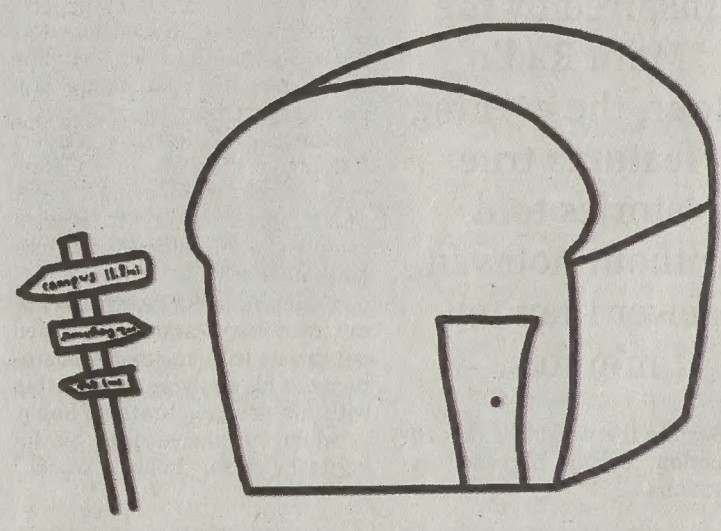
As of early October, Vermont's year-to-date case counts (5,130 per 100k) were lower than Maine (6,984), Connecticut (11,022), Massachusetts (11,896), and New York (12,305), according to the CDC. Measured by seven-day per-capita counts in early October, Vermont (156) was in better shape than New York (207) and Maine (289) but trailing Connecticut (77) and Massachusetts (139).

An "epidemic of confusion, frustration and distrust ... is currently raging across campus."

Where is the evidence to support this potentially alarming claim?

A central tenet of the AAUP's demands of Middlebury's administration has been that decision-making should be data-based, free of cognitive bias. Let's all embrace that ideal.

Jonathan Isham
Department of Economics and Program in Environmental Studies



Sabrina Templeton

Playtime with the Doric String Quartet

Op-Ed

Ben Beese *is a member of the class of 2021.5*

As I sit down to write this, I ask myself, "why bother?" It is common and far too accurate to joke about the absence of young people in concert halls. Such jokes were made to me at least twice in reference to last weekend's concert by the Doric String Quartet and Jonathan Biss. Of course, the stereotype is not entirely true — there are a few young people who still enjoy hearing, as composer Felix Mendelsohn put it, "songs without words." Yet the question remains — why do some of us enjoy what so many others on this campus do not?

I'd like to bring up a theory which I believe is refuted by last weekend's concert: so-called "classical" music lacks the vivacity to engage younger audiences. Regardless of the fact that the pieces played on Sunday — quartets by Beethoven and Béla Bartók, and a quintet by Edward Elgar — would be more accurately classified in the Romantic and Modernist periods, I can certainly understand why one would believe this proposed theory. The audience at last Saturday's concert was, at times, verging on catatonic. The only head-bopping to be found in the audience may have been my own. After the concert, I walked past a number of thumping, sweaty dorm parties. The juxtaposition between these two ways of listening to music was not lost on me. Popular music, by any definition, is made for dancing.

It's a shame that the bourgeois history of "classical" music in the last two hundred years has led to such stoic practices. The music performed last Saturday was every bit as physical as the music played through dorm speakers. Biss and the Doric String Quartet are well aware of this fact. Leaning together, swinging apart and swaying side-to-side, the quartet embodied the music's swells and drops. The right foot of violinist Alex Reddington never seemed to stop tapping. At moments, I half-expected the group to leap out of their seats and perform a jig.

These musicians were, in a very literal sense, a sight to be seen. Many of them forwent the traditional black suit for those of striking blue. Reddington even sported a pair of brightly colored, striped socks, which nicely highlighted his active feet. The musicians' outfits brought a touch of levity, as if to say, "We're here to have fun."

Dismissing the pretentiousness that has built up around "classical" music, the performers seemed more like children at play than bastions of European high culture. They seemed to play for the love of the activity itself. As a piece hurtled to its finale, bows were flourished like raised rapiers above the performers' heads. One could imagine them in some melodrama on an Italian piazza, perhaps costumed as Mercutio or Tybalt.

Theatricality is no trivial element when it comes to music. Good music deserves to be fully embodied. It is no coincidence that, in English, music is played just the same as a theatrical play. All of these activities share the adoration of life found in child's play. That adoration is communal. We feel the highs, the lows and the middling stretches together. Music has an inherent togetherness.

> There are a few young people who still enjoy hearing, as composer Felix Mendelsohn put it, "songs without words." Yet the question remains: why do some of us enjoy what so many others on this campus do not?

Even if the quartet hadn't introduced pianist Biss as "our really dear friend," the comradery between all five musicians would have been obvious. They passed themes and motifs one to the other with as much playfulness as technical skill. The folk-dance-inspired second part of Bartók's Third String Quartet was announced with a sudden plop which violist Hélène Clément sent deftly to violinist Ying Xue. Xue held the note's tension through a gorgeous passage of pizzicato, or plucked, folk themes. This is music that rewards close cooperation. The Doric String Quartet and Jonathan Biss played excellently together.

To the skeptical listeners who are still reading: "classical" music is no less lively, emotional or personal than anything else on Spotify. Sure, it can be esoteric and sometimes just bizarre, but there are outliers in any genre. If you're still unconvinced, I encourage you to give the next Performing Arts Series concert a try. My meagre 700 words can't convey the joy and aura of a concert, but I can assure you, there is a particular joy reserved for the musical. That joy is, at its essence, the same you'll find in a packed Friday-night dorm party or a Wednesday-night open mic.

HAVE SOMETHING TO SAY?

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Email **pbowman@middlebury.edu** with submissions.

Like moths to a flame: Attendees flock to 9th annual Cocoon

By ACADIA KLEPEIS
Arts & Culture Editor

The 9th annual Cocoon featured many of the constants that have marked its past decade. A faded paisley rug. A single microphone. A winged logo. And, once again, the gentle hum of a packed crowd.

Compared to last year's heavily-modified Cocoon event, the energy in the lobby before Friday night's show was electric. Students, professors, parents and community members were clearly overjoyed to be gathering in Mahaney Arts Center's Robison Hall after so many months away from campus. For students who have been inside the Middlebury bubble over the past year, the sight of so many silvery heads in the audience was bizarre, given how accustomed they are to seeing only young adults.

> Inspired by the Moth Radio Hour, the evening features true stories told without notes in fewer than ten minutes.

Despite the weight of this anticipation, Cocoon exceeded expectations.

The event was organized by the student organization known as Moth Up, led by co-presidents Alex Burns '21.5 and Kristen Morgenstern '24, who doubled as emcees. Inspired by the Moth Radio Hour, the evening features true stories told without notes in fewer than ten minutes. This year's theme, "Rebuilding," stands in contrast to the 2020 theme of "Downpour," and inspired stories that generally ended on a hopeful note.

The evening opened with a lively story from journalist and community member Christopher Ross. His impeccable comedic timing drew lots of laughs from the audience, even if their smiles were hidden behind their masks. He told the story of his original move to Middlebury in the early 2000s, fraught with snow storms, locked doors and his least favorite song — "Hotel California." The ten-minute tale had all the makings of a classic road trip comedy, and ended with a heartwarming speech about how, despite initial misgivings, he and his family grew to love the community they found in Vermont.

The second storyteller was Luna Simone-Gonzalez '24. She shared how her relationship with music shifted from being taught to love music as a lifestyle at the performing arts schools she attended in New York City to loving it in her own right and on her own terms at camp and at Middlebury, her first non-music school.

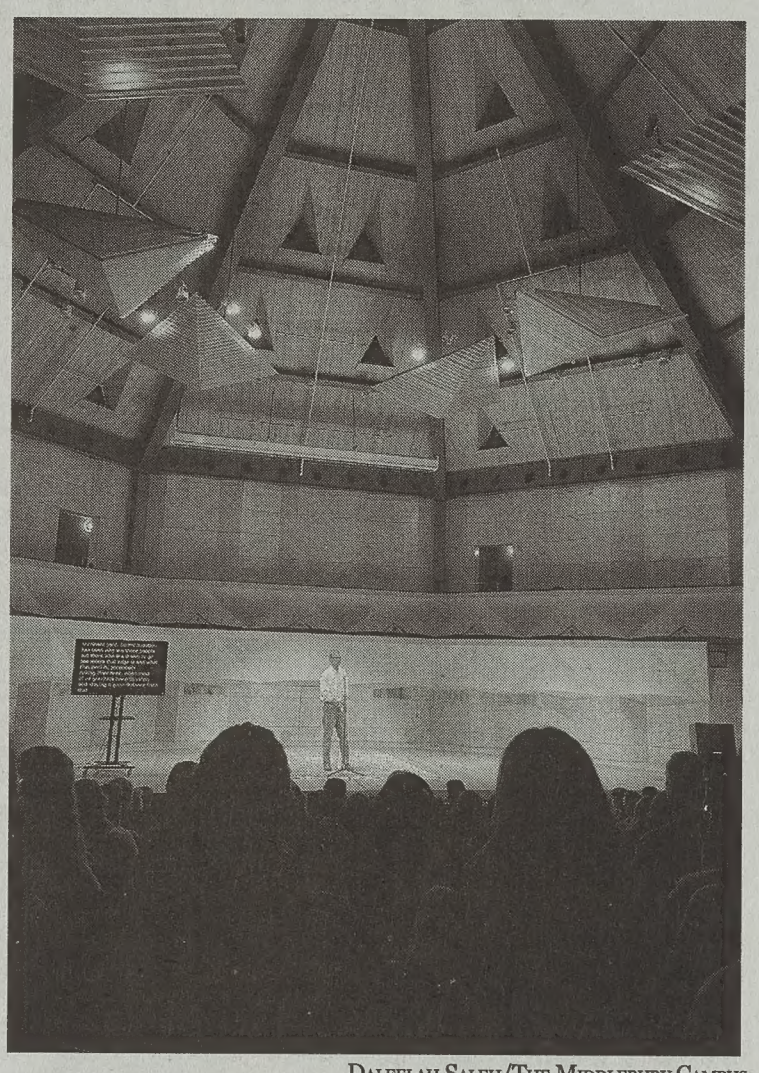
Senior Assistant Director of Admissions Steve Zatarain '15 closed out the act with an emotional story about his evolving relationship with his younger brother, Bobby — whom he named after his favorite TV show, "Bobby's World." The two were close as children, but their parents' difficult divorce pushed a wedge between them. The story ended on a sad note, as Zatarain explained how his brother had been a victim of gun violence twice. While Zatarain used humor throughout, this was definitely one of the night's more somber stories, and gave audience members a lot to mull over during the intermission.

After the show's intermission, Assistant Director of the Anderson Freeman Resource Center Janae Due welcomed the audience back with her moving tale about the links between her health and her hair. With intense honesty, Due recounted her experiences with precocious puberty as a child, undergoing surgeries as a teenager and suffering from premature menopause as a young adult. This story wasn't always easy-listening, but Due's powerful narrative left audience members with a compelling story of will and resistance.

Student Life Dean Scott Barnicle offered a good-natured, self-deprecating account of the ups and downs in his life over the past year and a half. He shared how the March 2020 lockdown left him sharing a home with his then-wife, with whom he was already in the process of getting a divorce after 29 years. When he eventually moved out, he overcame the relatable technological hurdles of Match.com and was lucky enough to meet a new partner. They celebrated their one-year anniversary last Saturday.

The final speaker was Keziah Wilde '24, who shared how she has been running at least one continuous mile every day since before her 10th birthday. Whether limping along on a strained hamstring or disguising her mile as a game of tag while at summer camp, she seems to view this challenge as an equalizer in her life, connecting who she is on a given day with who she has been on all the other days for the past decade. While she may not inspire every audience member to pick up the habit, she certainly left us thinking about what it means to be committed.

Missed the event? Catch a recording of the livestream from now until October 17 here.



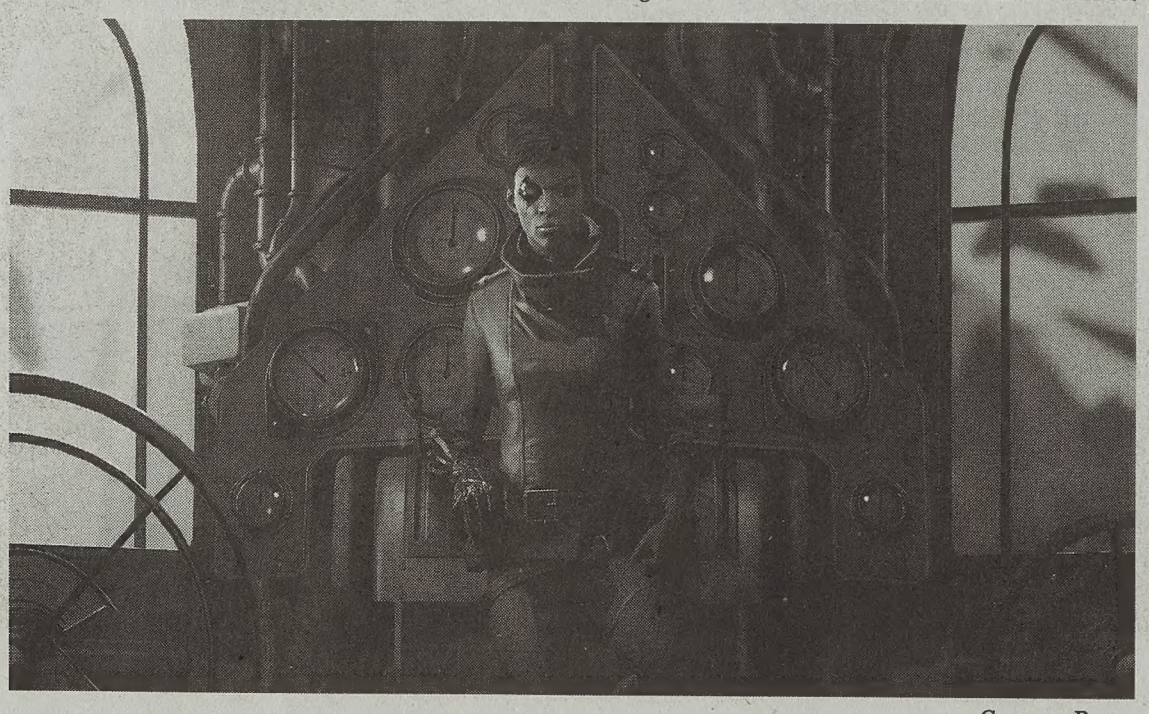
DALEELAH SALEH/THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS

In 9th annual rendition, Cocoon captivates students and family members alike with personal stories around the theme "rebuilding."

Controlling Chaos in "Dishonored: Death of the Outsider"

By NICHOLAS JACCACI
Contributing Writer

The satisfaction that comes from watching a Rube Goldberg machine in motion is something that is hard to properly replicate. A window slams shut, causing a tennis ball to bounce off a table into a cup that pulls a string, lifting a seesaw just enough to knock a line of dominos over until one falls off the table, turning the page of a book for a reader. It is something that is so utterly, terribly useless, but similarly fantastical in its unnecessary complexity. Each little piece fits perfectly in its place and feeds into the next, and the next, and the next, until the grand finale, when the purpose of the machine is somehow carried out.



COURTESY PHOTO

"Dishonored: Death of the Outsider" is a Rube Goldberg machine. Its purpose? Kill a god.

"Dishonored: Death of the Outsider" was developed by Arkane Studios and released on September 15, 2017 on PlayStation 4, Xbox One and Microsoft Windows. The game is an expansion of the Dishonored franchise and therefore builds on its world, story and lore. The game takes place primarily in Karnaca, a fictional city on the sea where apartments seem to emerge from the mountains surrounding the city's port. As protagonist Billie Lurk, the player's objective is to sneak through the streets of a city built and powered on the surplus of whale oil to find the key to killing the Outsider. The Outsider is a mysterious figure who had godly powers thrust upon him eons ago, and Lurk feels that the powers he represents and bestows onto others are too harmful to exist. So, the Outsider must go.

What makes "Dishonored: Death of the Outsider" so enjoyable, almost more so than the previous titles in the series, is how tight the playthrough experience is. About half of the player's time in the game is spent in a downtown Karnacian neighborhood. Through the span of several levels, the player becomes very familiar with the city's layout. The player will meet a shifty taxidermist, infiltrate the house of a snobbish singer and decide whether to kill or spare a mime just mimeing their own business. A contract system is in place through which the player can earn extra money by completing a myriad of lucrative black market quests that are full of charm in their own right. This push to complete each contract only further incentivizes the exploration of each alleyway, ramshackle home and rooftop. When the same buildings and areas are used, the player does not feel constricted; they feel like a local.

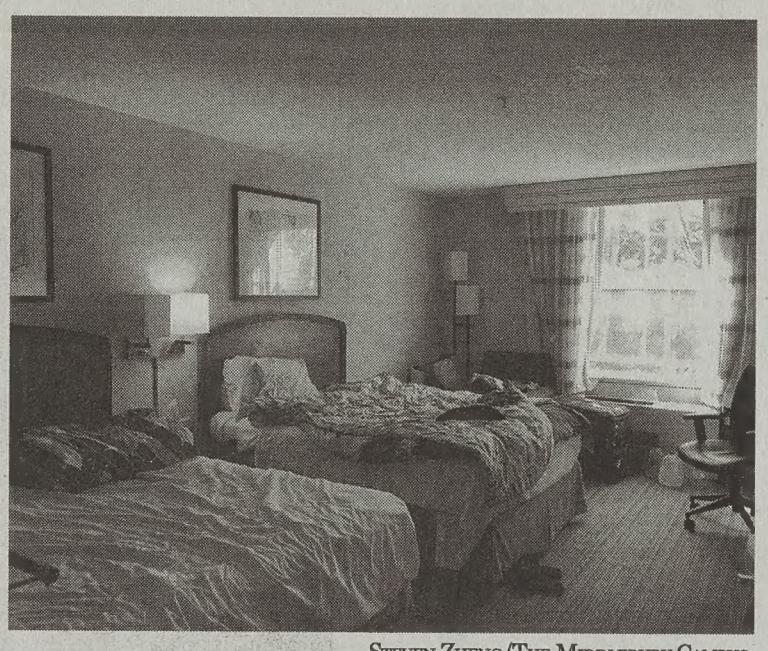
With each new task, the player gains more knowledge of the city's goings-on. An art auction may be occurring in the local courtyard that the player had visited after spying on a politician preparing his speech. How the player approaches said auction can be determined by how they approached the politician's speech. Will the player again use that trapdoor on the stage they found earlier?

The player becomes very confident in their spatial awareness. What was once a shadowy corner is now an opportunity. What was once another of the many apartments down the road is now the key to an optimal escape plan.

The tight level design is complemented by a small but mighty selection of gameplay mechanics. These include creating a spectre of Lurk to which a player can teleport, the ability to see through walls and mark your enemies and the ability to borrow an enemy's face to slip past their comrades. Because there are so few powers (granted to the player by the same god whom they are trying to kill, mind you), their integration into the game is both seamless and well executed. A solitary guard is always ever-so-conveniently taking a smoke break just outside a heavily-patrolled area for the player to steal her face. A single window usually happens to overlook a courtyard where an auction is, almost tempting the player to hop down and teleport right back up, shiny object in tow. The developers know exactly what tools the player is exposed to, and as such, the levels are designed around them.

"Dishonored: Death of the Outsider" is a fantastic time. The game is such a polished package, and each piece is placed meticulously, so that it can deliver an experience that is hard to rival. The player has only a few powers to juggle in a select few areas, but they feel absolute in their confidence, like the mastermind assassin they are. The player is the one who helped kill an empress. The player is the one who will kill the god. The player is the catalyst for a Rube Goldberg machine of death and destruction.

Students off campus face transportation and communication troubles



STEVEN ZHENG/THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS

Due to an abundance of students, the college has created housing at Bread Loaf, the Marriot and the Inn on the Green, forcing some students to get smart about transportation.

By CHARLIE KEOHANE
Editor at Large

For the cohort of students living off campus this year, getting to class is not a breezy five-minute stroll from their dorm room. Many juniors living at the Marriott, the Inn on the Green or Bread Loaf have felt let down by inconsistent transportation to campus and a lack of clear communication from the college.

Chang Ma '23 was deciding between living at Bread Loaf or at the Marriott, and ultimately chose the Marriott. He expressed frustration with the shuttle system, and has had to walk to campus, sometimes missing classes due to miscommunication about the shuttle schedules.

"They've [ResLife] never apologized or taken responsibility," Ma said.

Glenn Kontor '23 is living at Bread Loaf this semester, and described the experience as bittersweet. Kontor, like other Bread Loaf residents, received a room and board discount and future housing priority along with free ski passes for the coming season. Kontor looks forward to learning how to ski this winter, but the distance from campus has its challenges.

"It literally takes an hour to commute to and from Breadloaf and campus, as opposed to the five- to seven-minute walk I've experienced my first two years at Middlebury," Kontor said. "I can't go to my room to take a nap or grab something I've forgotten, and if I have any clubs or commitments in the evening, I'm waiting around on campus until I'm able to head home for the night."

Audrey Grimes '23 was originally placed at the Bread Loaf campus but jumped at the opportunity to live closer to campus. Now, she lives at the Inn on the Green with about 20 other students.

"I don't know what I was expecting, but it's definitely not bad," Grimes said. "I still feel like I'm pretty much on campus, because it is close. I can drive — I can walk if I want to."

Unlike students living at the Marriott and Bread Loaf, students living at the Inn on the Green do not receive any benefits like room and board discounts or future housing priority.

"I think we should at least get housing priority for next year," Grimes said. "It's still not ideal."

There are no RAs or other staff members at the Inn on the Green, which struck Grimes as strange. "I wish someone would check in on us and be like 'Hey, how is this going?'" she said. In addition to the lack of in-person support, Grimes has also been disappointed with the college's communication with residents and said that there is confusion surrounding parking and transportation.

Grimes said there are also concerns about the colder weather, since students will be less likely to walk or bike to campus and therefore will rely more on the shuttle system.

Middlebury College Art Museum aims to increase accessibility and inclusion with thematic rehang

By IDEAL DOWLING
Editor at Large

In January 2021, the Middlebury College Art Museum began an extensive rehang — installing a new organization concept that displays permanent collection art by theme rather than based on region and chronology, as is typical of most European and American museums. With this rehang, along with the implementation of related initiatives, museum organizers hoped to increase the museum's accessibility and inclusivity to reach a wider audience and to showcase a more diverse range of artists.

Jason Vrooman '03 serves as both the chief curator and director of engagement for the museum, roles that are separated into two distinct jobs at most museums. His experience connecting the responsibilities of each role helped him plan and conceptualize the rehang project. His role as director of engagement challenges him to consider how people connect with the works on display while he completes duties related to acquisition and exhibition organization in his role as curator.

"It's very unusual to have a double curator and educator, but we like it because the two [roles] inform each other. As I curate, I try to keep in mind how the works will support the museum's educational goals as a resource for Middlebury classes, local schools and adult community members," Vrooman said.

Beginning in late 2019, Vrooman worked closely with Museum Director Richard Saunders, Associate Curator of Ancient Art Pieter Broucke, Museum Registrar Meg Wallace and Museum Designer Ken Pohlman to rethink how the permanent collection could be used to tell new stories. Sabarsky Graduate Fellow Sarah Briggs '14.5 and Sarah Laursen — who served as the museum's curator of Asian art before departing from the museum staff in summer 2020 — were also closely involved in the beginning stages of the process.

The committee also frequently sought student input from participants in the 2020 summer internship program and conducted a survey of professors who had historically used the museum in their courses to ensure changes would not disrupt existing teaching.

For about a year, the group met weekly to discuss how chronological and geographical approaches to displaying art contribute to Eurocentric biases and to strategize ways to remedy this narrow lens at Middlebury's museum.

"Our museum has for decades been collecting a diverse array of artists, but the permanent collection has a particular focus on Mediterranean, American and European art while other stories were told in small ways," said Vrooman. "We've been focusing on collecting more work from women, queer artists and artists of color for long before the rehang project began, and we wanted to find a way to highlight this diversity by having themes."

Vrooman also mentioned that the museum plans to add more works from indigenous and disabled artists.

The group ultimately chose 12 themes to juxtapose works from across time periods and cultures. Some of the themes include Art and Activism, Portraiture, People and the Planet, Ritual and Devotion, Death and Remembrance, Intersecting Cultures and The Art of Storytelling. Under Death and Remembrance, for example, Han Dynasty funereal art shares a space with pieces from ancient Egyptian burial practice.

"We really hope people will look for similarities, but we also want to respect the difference between these works," said Vrooman. "We want these spaces to open up dialogue and invite conversation about important social issues, as well as ask people to think about how the past influences how we engage with one another in the present."

To supplement the rehang, the committee enlisted museum ambassadors and other students to help write new labels and edit existing text to bolster inclusivity. Claire Darrow '22, a museum ambassador since fall 2019, described how the language used in museums can often uphold stereotypes and reify certain cultural biases.

"We used terms that might be easier to understand if you don't have a specific art history educational background. I hope that something as small as a label or inclusive language can make people feel more comfortable in a museum setting and allow them to see their stories and perspectives reflected in the art," Darrow said.

One example Darrow referenced as a common misleading use of language in museums is the use of the past tense when describing art from indigenous cultures of the Americas, which can imply that they no longer exist. "These cultures are still very active," Darrow said.

Florence Wu/The Middlebury Campus

The Middlebury College Art Museum underwent an extensive rehang around a new organization concept that groups art by theme rather than chronology or region.

Aside from descriptive labels, the museum also instituted what it calls its "Label Talk Initiative." Through this project, three participants respond to each selected artwork from a personal, professional or academic perspective. Vrooman hopes that showcasing three separate viewpoints will show that there are multiple ways to view art and help make the museum a space where many voices are welcome.

"Part of our process was challenging the expectations of who gets to interpret art in a museum," said Vrooman. "In most museums, you don't know who wrote the labels, but you can presume they came through a very particular educational path."

Pearl Akoto '24, who grew up in Ghana before moving to New York, got involved with the Label Talk Initiative by writing a personal response to a piece called "Untitled (with red)" by the Ghanian artist El Anatsui. "I had never seen any form of representation of my culture, especially in Vermont," she said.

While the piece is a commentary on the transatlantic slave trade, Akoto hopes her response will help visitors focus on the modern aspects of the work and its evocation of current day issues related to environmental justice.

"I actually tried to avoid referencing the transatlantic slave trade. Of course the struggles and pains of slavery are a part of our history and culture, but we are much more than that and are not allowing it to define us anymore," she said. "We are emerging from that and creating a new narrative for the present."

Museum visitors can continue the conversation by scanning a QR code next to the piece and adding their own response on a virtual blog.

In addition to the thematic reorganization, the new design instituted other components to increase accessibility. These changes included lowering the hanging height of most works by about two inches, which can make a substantial difference for visitors in a wheelchair, children or someone who chooses to sit to view a work. Staff also increased the font size on labels and chose to use black sans serif text against a white wall after researching the legibility of different type fonts.

There are fewer works on display in the new organization to open more space for tour groups and classes to visit without getting too close to the pieces. However, approximately 15 works from the permanent collection will rotate at the end of each semester because they are light sensitive. The pieces in rotation will specifically include works from diverse artists.

Vrooman hopes the rehang has been a positive step toward inclusivity but also acknowledged there is still a lot more work to do.

"We are open to responses that may reshape the way we think and invite members of the community to offer feedback directly or at bit.ly/MuseumComments," said Vrooman.

Currently, the museum is open only to students, faculty and staff by appointment due to Covid-19 precautions. In addition to the permanent collection galleries, visitors can enjoy the special exhibitions "A New Lens: Contemporary Video & Animation" and "Art & Protest: Artists as Agents of Social Change," both on display until Dec. 12.

Language Tables return to Redfield Proctor after 18 months

By ALEXANDRA BURNS
Contributing Writer

"Hi, everyone, and welcome to Language Tables," a cheery voice called from the top of the stairs in Redfield Proctor. "We are back for the first time since March 10, 2020."

The voice belonged to Amanda Coccia '22, one of the co-managers of Language Tables. On Monday, September 27, she was excited to greet students in person again after nearly a year-and-a-half of hosting Language Tables on Zoom. Just like during pre-Covid-19 times, a line of eager students snaked down the stairs and around toward the front door. The only noticeable difference was that students in the line were masked.

Coccia, who is in her third year as a manager of Language Tables, recalled the day that students received the email that they would be sent home due to Covid-19.

"As a manager that day, I was called to every table. The TAs were asking me 'what's going on and what do we do' and I didn't have any answers myself," she said.

After such a rocky last day over a year-and-a-half ago, the first day back seemed to go seamlessly. Coccia, along with head waiter Christina Chen '23, checked in students, asking for their names and which table they wanted to attend. Each round table was labeled with a sign marking the language and the Teaching Assistants (TAs) were seated at their designated tables. The Chinese, French and Spanish tables filled up quickly while the German and Russian TAs were both left sitting at empty tables. The Russian TA, Anastasiia Kozhukhova, surmised that the Russian classes had not yet been informed about attending Language Tables.

As students took their seats, waiters and kitchen staff rushed around near the kitchen. In past years, Language Tables were staffed by both student workers and a few employees from Proctor dining hall. This year, due to a staff shortage, student workers have had to fill all of these positions.

Jennie Bob Bizal-Clark '22, the other co-manager of Language Tables, explained that while they hired many of their employees over the summer, their staff fluctuates on a day-to-day basis. Some days there are still positions that are left unfilled. She told me that on that first day, Coccia had to stay at Language Tables for forty minutes after the designated end time.

"I think that was a combination of things. On the first day, no one really knows what they're doing, especially since we have a lot of people who have never worked in-person. They only know the language component," Bizal-Clark explained.

For students who knew Language Tables prior to the pandemic, it resembled its former state, but for many students who began attending on Zoom last year, this was uncharted territory. French waiter Daphne Halley '22.5 explained that two years of students — the current first years and sophomores — don't know how Language Tables typically operate as they have never attended in-person before.

"Food was put in front of them and they didn't know to eat it," she said. After transitioning from Zoom to in-person, students simply didn't know what to expect.

Portuguese student Damaris Neaves '24 has attended Language Tables twice so far this semester. She started taking Advanced Portuguese this semester with Associate Professor of Luso-Hispanic Studies Mario Higa, and she is required to attend at least once a week.

"We were all sort of getting acclimated," she said. "I didn't know there was going to be a waiter because my first year, Language Tables were on Zoom, and you would just call in and eat with food you had already picked up."

She described her first in-person experience as "intimate," with only the TA and a handful of students at the table. "It was really cool seeing the translation of all the ingredients and learning how to place an order," Neaves said.

Liam Ferry '24, a student of Chinese, French and Spanish, is now a waiter for Chinese tables and a TA for the French table. Last year, he went to Language Tables a few times on Zoom.

"It's a tricky experience eating with people you don't know in a language you don't really speak at a formal restaurant that serves Proctor food, so it can be awkward at times," Ferry said.

Nevertheless, Ferry prefers being in-person.

Another pandemic-related challenge is the absence of professors at the tables. Professors used to attend the tables as a way to interact more informally with students in their target language, but with the college's current Covid-19 policies, professors are not permitted to dine indoors with students. In response to this policy, the Italian department has decided to relocate their Language Tables to the Italian house. Department Chair Professor of Italian Tom Van Order described their location switch as the only way they were able to include professors — by hosting them at outdoor tables beside the house while weather permits.

In an email to The Campus, Associate Professor of Arabic Samuel Liebhaber applauded the dedication of the waiters and explained that the success of the language table program depends on the attitude of the students who attend them, rather than on whether or not their professor is in attendance.

In the Arabic department, there are enough upper-level Arabic students to TA the tables that the official TA herself, Maryait Khader, is not required to attend. Instead, she hosts daily events in the Arabic house, which have had high turnout.

From Redfield Proctor to Zoom and back again, Language Tables persist as a part of all language students' Middlebury experience.

Charlie Deichman-Caswell/The Middlebury Campus

After a year-and-a-half of being held on Zoom, language tables return to indoor dining in Redfield Proctor without professors.

REEL CRITIC: "The Year of the Everlasting Storm"

By SHANE SILVERMAN
Contributing Writer

COURTESY PHOTO

At this week's Hirschfield International Film Series screening, audiences were transported back to the brink of the Covid-19 pandemic to relive its uncertainty. An anthology film of seven distinct shorts by seven global directors, "The Year of the Everlasting Storm" chronicles the human condition from all corners of the world in the face of an invisible enemy. The film is more than a recapitulation of events; it's an intimate expression of emotions shown through masterful cinematography. Each director independently reminds their audience of the universal feelings of tension, yearning, fear, love, powerlessness, hope and the seemingly never-ending boredom of an unrelenting, everlasting storm: the Covid-19 pandemic.

The film opens with Jafar Panahi's short film, "Life," set in Tehran, Iran. The film was shot entirely on a cell phone inside an apartment. The audience joins a family and their pet iguana who is basking in the sun pouring through the window, enjoying the serenity of isolation and the distant song of sirens with his human companions. The peace does not last long, however, as a knock on the door presents a figure wearing a hazmat suit. Much to the shock of the family and the audience alike, the mask is lowered to present the warm, welcoming smile of an elderly woman: Mom! As the short continues, undertones of tension permeate scenes of pandemic normalcy, detailing the struggles of intergenerational differences and connecting safely with loved ones. Despite the constant, ever-present anxiety of early quarantine, Panahi manages to extend the warmth of love through the screen and provide audiences with an acute, yet powerful, sentiment of hope.

A collection of films depicting only positive outcomes would be untrue to the experience of the pandemic. Transitioning to Wuhan, China, director Anthony Chen shows a young family growing apart in his short, "The Break Away." Viewers join a burnt-out mother, immature father and rowdy toddler stuck in a cramped apartment. With each scene, the bonds that hold the family are eroded by financial difficulty, misunderstanding and temper tantrums. The short closes with the couple chain-smoking cigarettes on the balcony. As the husband reaches for his wife's hand, a final and failed attempt at affection, the characters and audience realize that the home is just as lonely as the empty city below.

"The Year of the Everlasting Storm" also captures the tension between citizens and their governments. Two short documentaries, "Little Measures" directed by Malik Vitthal, and "Terror Contagion" directed by Laura Poitras, depict the changing relationship between those in power and the ones they govern.

Vitthal enchants audiences with a story following California father Bobby Jones, who stops at nothing to regain custody of his three children, separated from him in different foster homes. An engaging monologue overlaid with fluid animations and intimate video calls, "Little Measures" shows a father overcoming the seemingly insurmountable obstacles of the legal system, urban violence and Covid-19 to be with his beloved children.

Poitras sheds light on the virtual and physical violence associated with international spyware companies. Accounts from all corners of the globe are compiled and analyzed by investigative reporters, connecting the dots between an Israeli tech firm, oppressive governments and global violence, including the murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi. As the audience is presented with the terrifying capabilities and applications of spyware, images of local law enforcement militarizing in New York City set up a bone-chilling comparison between violent governments abroad and defenders of liberty at home.

The final short, "Night Colonies," directed by Apichatpong Weerasethakul, is set in an empty bed illuminated with insect-attracting lights. For the entirety of the short, bugs buzz, crawl and fly among the bulbs and sheets to the pitter-patter of rain on the roof. The short is monotonous and devoid of plot, yet the interactions among insects are strangely alluring. The full exposure to restless bugs prompts the audience to contemplate their own lives, finding comparisons with the insignificance of the insects' actions during pandemic lockdown.

While no two pandemic experiences were the same, humans globally put their lives on hold to isolate, enduring alone, together. As the lights raised at the end of the film, audiences were left to reflect on the emotional weight of the past year and a half and to wonder what comes after the year of the everlasting storm.

RADIO ROUNDUP: Can't help falling in love with a new autumn playlist

By WRMC EXEC BOARD

**RIYL (recommended if you like)*

Co-Concert Manager Exec Pick — Luke Robins '23

Album: "Sometimes I Might Be Introvert" — Little Simz

Genre: Hip-Hop

RIYL: Noname, Slowthai, Tierra Whack

Blurb: Little Simz had my favorite verse of 2019 with her feature on "New Breed" and I was still blown away by how much I loved this new album. The versatility of Inflo's beats is only surpassed by Little Simz's ability to adapt her voice and flow to each new style thrown her way. Little Simz does it all on this album that will go down as one of my favorites of 2021.

General Manager's Exec Pick — Maddie Van Beek '22.5

Album: "A PawPaw Rod EP" — PawPaw Rod

Genre: Hip-Hop, Funk

RIYL: binki, Terry Presume, Jelani Aryeh

Blurb: PawPaw Rod's debut single, "HIT EM WHERE IT HURTS" is what got me through last winter and the tail end of my semester off. It is filled to the brim with good vibes and addictive rhythms. Since its release, I have eagerly awaited each new single until now, when we finally have the complete EP.

Library Manager's Exec Pick — Kyle Hooker '24

Album: "The Subdudes" — The Subdudes

Genre: Roots, Folk Rock, Cajun

RIYL: Keb' Mo', The Radiators, Seal

Blurb: This is a really fun album with prominent horn riffs, harmonic vocals and interesting instrumentation in general. For example, the band substitutes a tambourine for drums, giving it a different sort of feel/beat. The group is from New Orleans and nicely blends elements of folk, R&B, country, funk and gospel. It's a perfect soundtrack of a leisurely weekend morning.

Tech Director's Exec Pick — Dan Frazo '23

Album: "Payador" — Tim Hill

Genre: Psychedelic Folk, Desert Rock

RIYL: Khruangbin, Leonard Cohen, Liz Cooper, The Stampede

Blurb: Tim Hill is an LA-based singer/songwriter with a unique ability to bring time to a complete standstill. After listening to his debut (and only) album, "Payador," straight through, one finds themself trapped in a hot blur, like a cold glass of water left outside in the Arizona desert. Bringing together slow rhythms, melancholic lyrics and captivating loops, "Payador" is a masterpiece of genre-mashing psychedelia.

Social Media Director's Exec Pick — Kai Velazquez '23

Album: "After Hours" — Rahsaan Patterson

Genre: R&B

RIYL: Eric Roberson, Meshell Ndegeocello

Blurb: This is the kind of album that'll get you cheesing and thinking about your boo. "After Hours" is composed of funky, upbeat and Isley-ish vibes. Patterson's vocals are fused with enthusiasm and get you moving on your feet.

Music Director's Exec Pick — Natalie Penna '24

Album: "Transatlanticism" — Death Cab for Cutie

Genre: Indie, Emo

RIYL: The Decemberists, Bright Eyes, Slaughter Beach, Dog

Blurb: "Transatlanticism" is a laid-back, mostly-quiet, melodic album to listen to as you stare at your ceiling. It's seriously one of my favorite albums of all time, and I love Ben Gibbard's songwriting. Listen to the Tiny Vessels to Transatlanticism to Passenger Seat sequence — you can thank me later!

Co-Concerts Manager's Exec Pick — Yardena Carmi '23

Album: "Working for the Knife" — Mitski

Genre: Indie Rock

RIYL: Phoebe Bridgers, Japanese Breakfast, Soccer Mommy

Blurb: Mitski's back, baby! After a three-year break from releasing music — aside from a couple of guest spots and soundtracks — this new single falls effortlessly into the existing Mitski canon. Come for the infectious, silky-sweet vocals; stay for the existential dread.

SAHANA RAMAN '25 QUALIFIES FOR ITA CUP IN GEORGIA

By JACK McGUIRE
Contributing Writer

With her teammates, coaches and parents all supporting her from the sidelines, Sahana Raman '25 was the last person standing in one of the most prestigious New England tennis tournaments. But the reality of her great accomplishment did not hit her until weeks later.

On Sunday, Oct. 3, Raman won the Intercollegiate Tennis Association (ITA) New England Championship Singles Title, earning a bid to compete at the ITA Cup in Rome, Georgia on Oct. 14.

Raman, a first year, has quickly adjusted to college competition. For Raman, the biggest transition has not been the increased competition, but playing tennis on a team for the first time; growing up, Raman mostly played tennis on an individual level. Though she was anxious about the transition, she credits her teammates for their encouragement and care. "They're all really welcoming and supportive," she said.

Though the transition from high school to college competition can be tough for any athlete, Raman feels her training prepared her.

At the ITA New England Championship, Raman attributed her success not only to her forehand and serving skills, but also to her mental training. Middlebury tennis coaches Rob Barr and Hannah Fleckenstein have worked with Raman on mental preparation and staying calm in matches by taking deep breaths.

Raman says that this preparation helped her succeed even though she was relatively inexperienced in competing against the higher level college competition.

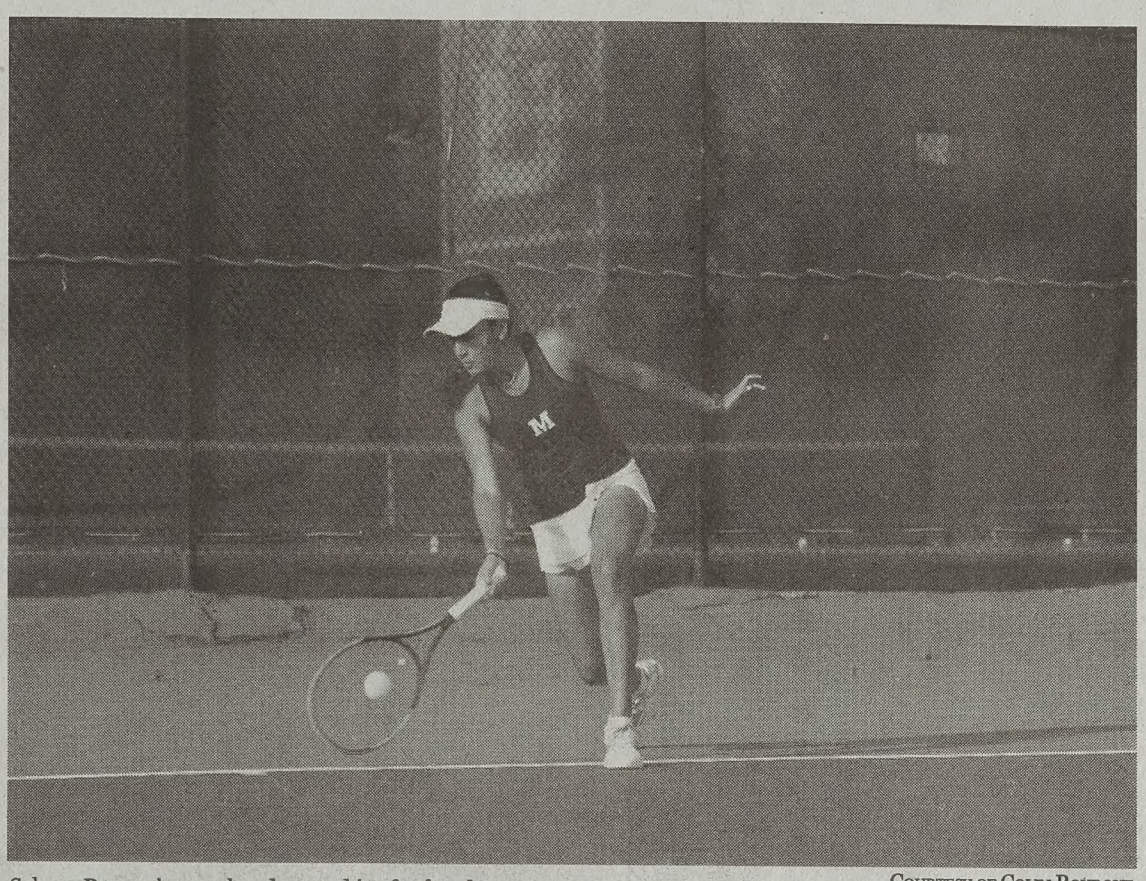
At the tournament, Raman dedicated her run to her grandfather, who had passed away a few weeks earlier. She was able to push through her grief to win.

"It was tough," Raman said. "I thought about him a lot throughout the matches."

Fortunately, Raman had support from her parents throughout the tournament. Particularly, her father, who introduced her to tennis and served as her coach through her childhood, was able to support her and help her through matches. His presence also made her win extra meaningful.

"I've had a lot of different coaches growing up, but [my dad] has always been there," Raman said.

His presence made Raman's win extra meaningful; however, Raman says she did not really feel the importance of her win.



Sahana Raman '25 reaches down to hit a forehand. COURTESY OF COLIN BOURQUE

"I didn't have many emotions," Raman said. "Thinking back on it, I was just shocked."

Now, Raman's new challenge is competing in the ITA Cup, where she will be competing against college athletes outside of New England for the first time. However, her overall goal is still to win the NCAA championship with the rest of the Middlebury team.

"Always my goal growing up has been kind of winning the NCAA championship together," Raman said. "We want to keep striving for a great group dynamic."

Seven questions for Zander Kessler '22.5, men's cross country

By BLAISE SIEFER
Senior Sports Editor

Zander Kessler '22.5, from Concord, Mass., is a senior Feb on the men's cross country team. In this installment of "Seven Questions," Kessler reveals his favorite part about being on the cross country team, his favorite memory from the season so far and one thing that people don't realize about the sport.

BS: Why Middlebury?

ZK: I chose Middlebury because I wanted a strong academic school with a strong cross country/ track and field program where I would be pushed but still able to contribute and score. I toured almost all of the NESCAC schools but felt the most welcomed by the team and community at Middlebury.

BS: What do you study here and how do you spend your free time?

ZK: I'm an environmental studies-chemistry joint major. Coursework and sports take a significant chunk of my time, but I love to ski during J-Term, and I've been known to take long, leisurely meals in the dining halls with teammates and other friends on days when I have a lighter load. This fall I've been getting outside to swimming holes or leaf-peeping spots before the weather gets too cold.

BS: What's your favorite part about being on the cross country team at Midd?

ZK: My favorite part about the team is the sense of community. When I arrived for preseason my freshman year, I had 20 best friends right away. With so many diverse interests, someone on the team is always down for some sort of activity or able to help me with some sort of problem. I really enjoy how close we are with the women's cross country team as well as the larger track team because that means any question can always be answered by someone on the team. The support network of a 100-person team is a crucial part of my health, happiness, and both academic and athletic success.

BS: What has been your favorite memory from this season so far?

ZK: I don't know about a specific moment but my favorite part of this season so far has been [being] able to have meals at the same table again. I never laugh harder than when we have a big group crowded around a table at a Proc dinner.

BS: Are there any misconceptions about cross country as a sport?

ZK: People don't realize how much thought goes into racing. Before a meet, we will strategize about gaps and weak spots in other teams just like you would in other sports. In our last meet, there were 493 men entered, so it was important to know beforehand the jerseys of the teams that were the strongest and which individuals are strong but on slightly weaker teams. It's also important to know the landmarks of a particular course to judge how much time you have left. I'm constantly doing math in my head while running to calculate how fast I'm going, which teams have people ahead of me, how many people are ahead of me and what our team's score is.

BS: Where is your favorite spot to run in Vermont?

ZK: Running is beautiful everywhere around here, but I especially love the dirt roads on South Street and Creek Road.

BS: What is one thing about you that few people know?

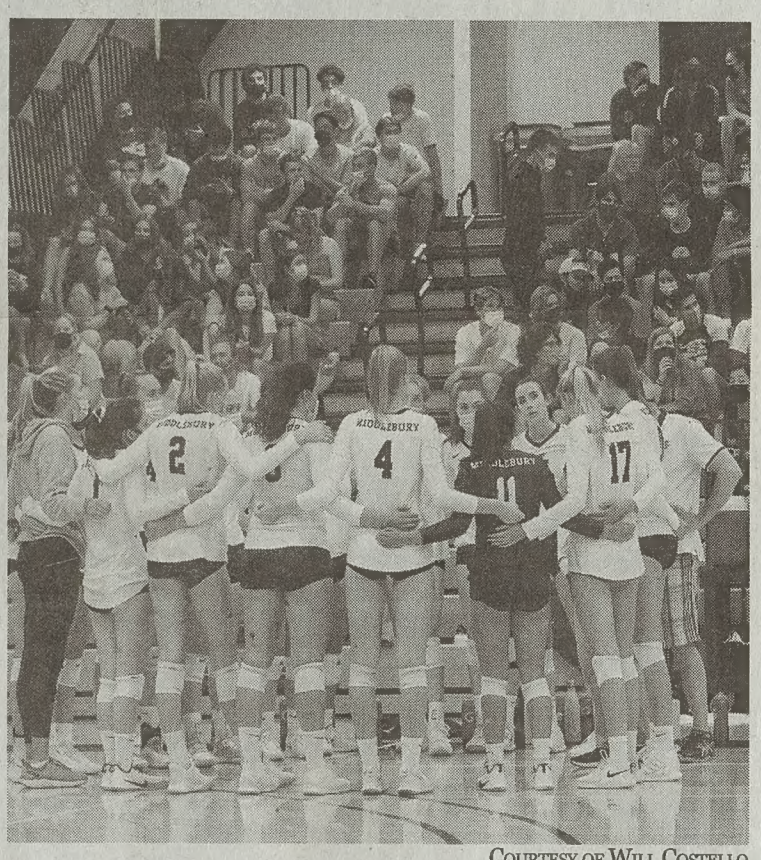
ZK: My friends know this, but the reason I go by Zander with a Z is that in Kindergarten there were two other Alexanders in my class and I didn't want to have Alex K on my name tag. I spelled it phonetically with a Z instead of an X because I hadn't grasped the concept of X making a Z sound.

Editor's Note: This interview has been edited for brevity and clarity.

COURTESY OF NICOLE JOHNSON

Zander Kessler '22.5 charges forward at the Mike Woods Invitational meet in Geneseo, N.Y. on Oct. 2. Kessler would finish 15th out of 404 individuals.

WOMEN'S VOLLEYBALL OFF TO HISTORIC START



COURTESY OF WILL COSTELLO

Women's volleyball huddles during its match against St. Michael's College on Sept 7. The Panthers would defeat the Purple Knights, 3–0.

By CHARLES CROUNSE
Staff Writer

After opening their season with 14 straight wins, women's volleyball (15-1-0) has secured their spot in the history books. The team has compiled their best start to a season in program history, sitting tied for first in the NESCAC with a 0.938 win percentage.

Volleyball started their season with four consecutive sweeps, winning three straight sets in every match. Their dominance continued throughout their first month of play, before Wesleyan finally broke Middlebury's win streak on Oct. 11. In a tightly contested match, the Cardinals narrowly prevailed, 3–2.

Still unbeaten on their home court at Pepin Gymnasium, volleyball is tied with Amherst, Bowdoin and Williams at the top of the league — although the Panthers still rank first among NESCAC teams in overall win percentage.

While volleyball's stunning record may come as a slight surprise to some, it has not been a shock to the players. Top scorer and senior captain Maggie Wise '22 cites the team's excellent chemistry on and off the court as a key ingredient to their success this season.

"We have established a high level of trust in one another that I haven't had with many other teams while playing the sport," Wise said. "I have the utmost level of confidence in this group and wouldn't trade them for anyone else."

Wise also credited her fellow seniors in fostering the sense of community and teamwork that has been pivotal for the team thus far.

"The seniors have done a really great job of building a good team culture," Gabbie O'Tool '25, who leads the team in assists, said. "As a freshman, being able to have the team's trust in my abilities has been really encouraging."

"We're really focused on approaching each game with the same intensity and on playing clean Middlebury volleyball to finish out the regular season the best we can," Lexi Linafelter '24 added. Linafelter also credited the team's incredibly "competitive yet supportive" practice environment in playing a key role in the team's strong performances.

The team's chemistry and teamwork is also largely derived from their incredible depth across the starting lineup and bench, with multiple players ranking among the conference's best in their respective positions. Corley Doyle '22 is second in the NESCAC in hitting percentage (.410), while Kelly Ferrero '25 is third in digs per set (4.67). The aforementioned O'Toole ranks second in assists (9.25 per set).

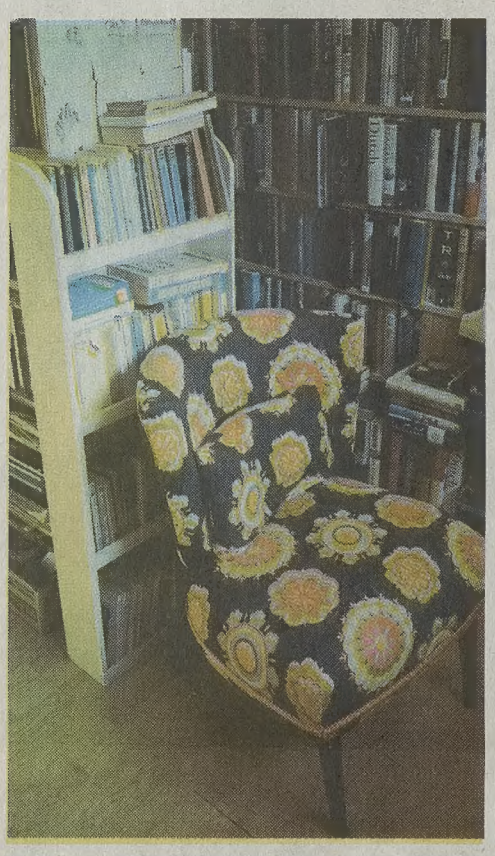
Looking ahead, the team sees no reason for its success to stop. Wise, O'Toole and Linafelter all agree that the team aims to win the NESCAC conference and host the tournament with home court advantage. The trio also has high hopes for the NCAA tournament as the team looks to capitalize on its current momentum.

Women's volleyball continues its season Friday, Oct. 15 as they travel to Bowdoin College. The Panthers haven't beaten Bowdoin since 2016.

Barbara Harding: I bought a used bookstore and quit my job

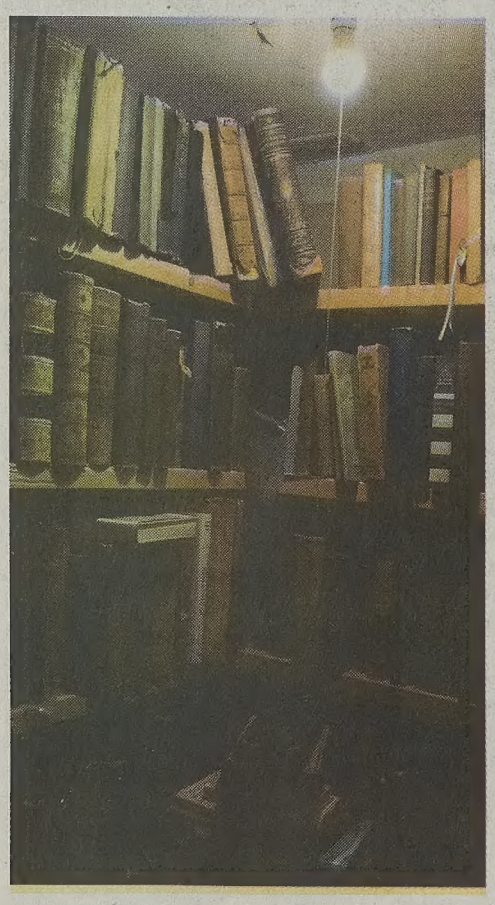
By FLORENCE WU
Local Editor

A corner in the collections room.

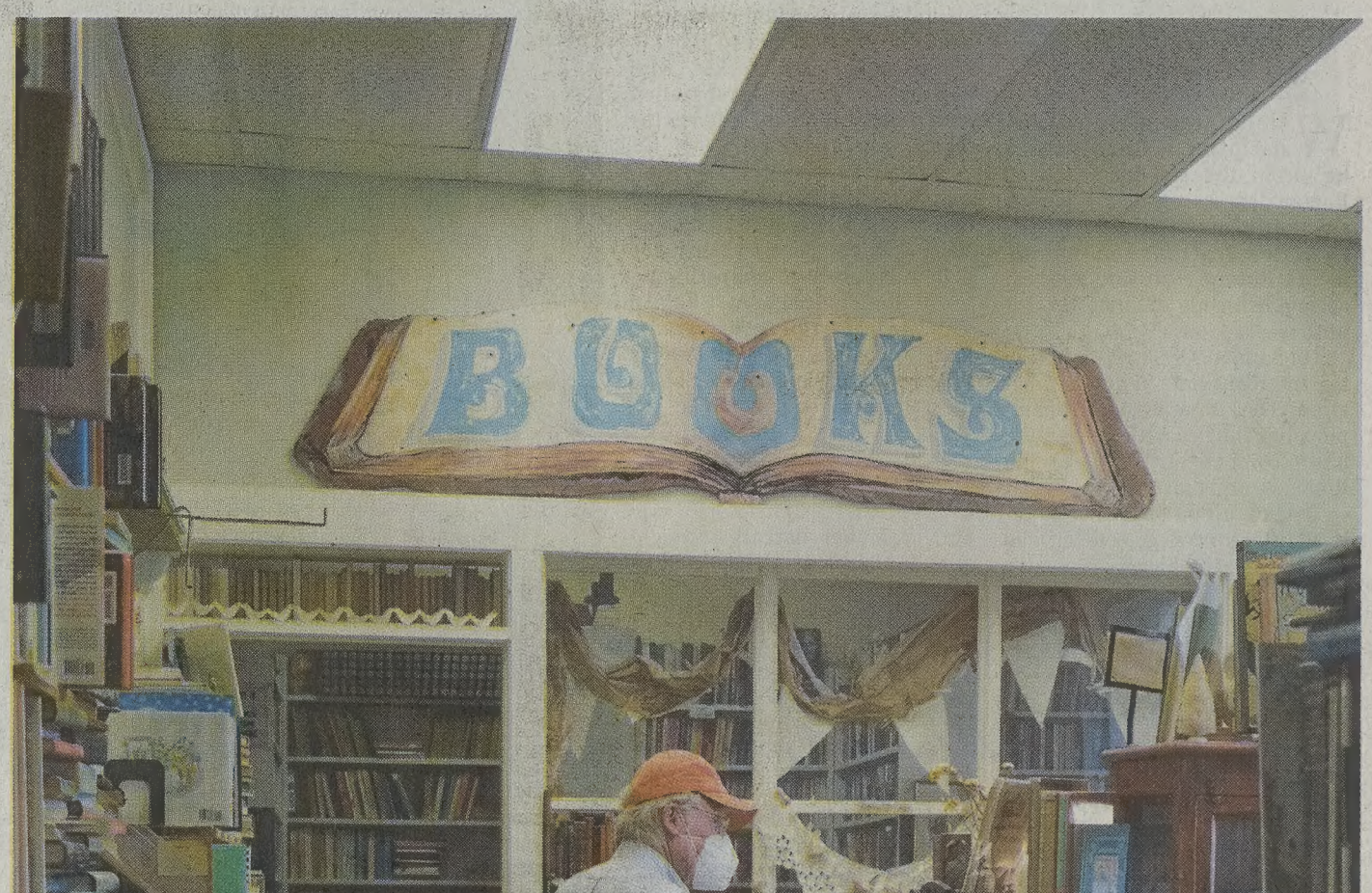


A reading chair in the main room.

A stack of books and a pinned-up painting.



The collections room.



A customer asking for aviation books.

Continued from Page 4

According to Barbara, the bookstore was in horrible condition when she first purchased it in 2006. Stacks of books were crammed into a small, dark basement on Main Street, its former location. The previous owner inherited the shop from his parents but cared little for books. After she took over, Barbara began cleaning up immediately. Five years later, the shop moved into its current location at Marble Works with two main reading rooms and three smaller rooms dedicated to children's books, special collections, and gardening books.

In the past year, business has been more difficult due to indefinite periods of lockdowns. However, the bookstore also received many book donations and personal support from the community, which, according to Barbara, were particularly helpful financially and mentally. Barbara based her business model on that of a traditional secondhand bookstore, so Otter Creek Used Books has very few online sales.

Despite many other businesses moving online, Barbara was determined to focus on in-person exchanges when possible. Outside of the pandemic, she is also unfazed by the entry of giants such as Amazon into the book retail sector. Barbara believes that the second-hand bookstore targets a different pool of consumers and has not been impacted too much.

"I won't ever go online or become a digital bookshop. I want people to come in excited because they never know what they are going to find in a secondhand bookstore," she said. "I don't care if we are going down because of that. If we are going down, we are going to go down my way."

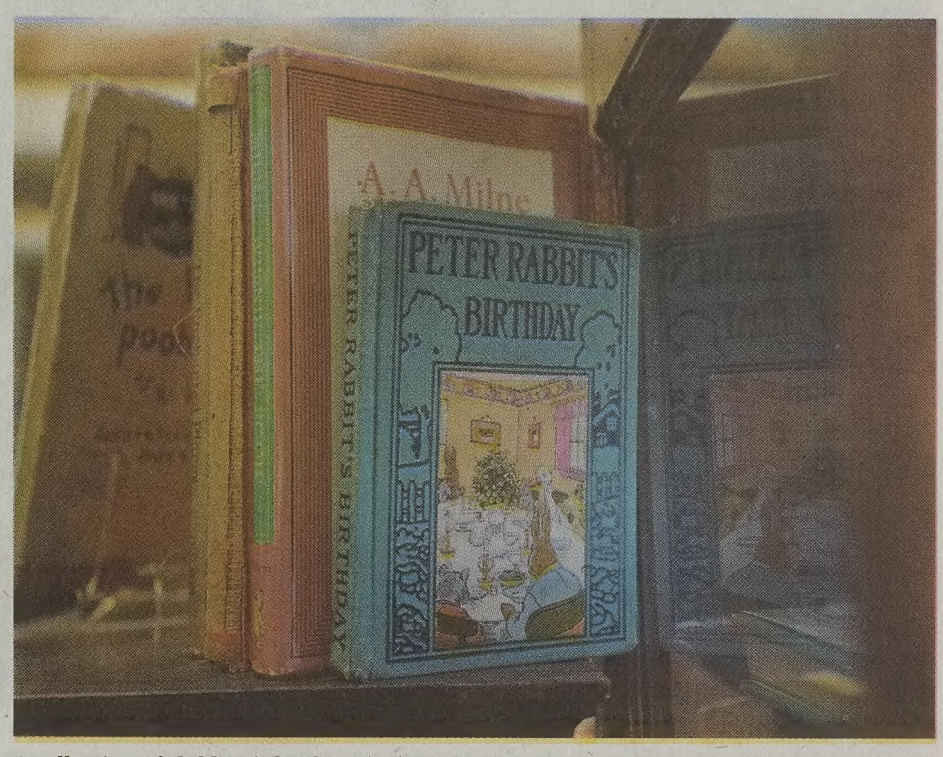
Barbara has never planned to own a second-hand bookstore, yet she is content with where she ended up in life. In college, She studied education and wanted to become a teacher. Although that never ended up happening, Barbara believes that she has fulfilled most of her personal and financial goals.

When asked about her future plans, Barbara seemed surprised by the question and stopped briefly in thought.

"I am always excited when boxes of books arrive because you never know what you are going to get. Once that thrill is gone, that's when I know my time with the shop is done," she said. "But I've ran it for 15 years, and that excitement has never changed one bit."

Barbara's desk.

A recently arrived book that Barbara is excited about.



A collection of children's book at the bookstore.